HISTORY OF BENGALI LITERATURE

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Foreword by

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FOREWORD

Many months ago Professor Sukumar Sen sent me a proof copy of his book on the History of Bengali Literature and asked me to write a foreword to it. My immediate reaction was not in favour of this proposal. It seemed to me presumptuous that I, knowing so very little about Bengali literature, should presume to write such a foreword to a book by a scholar.

At the same time I was attracted by the subject and was eager to learn something about this great literature of ours. I kept the proof copy of Professor Sukumar Sen's book with me and travelled about with it, dipping into it whenever time permitted. And so months have passed and I owe an apology to Professor Sen and to the Sahitya Akademi which has sponsored this book.

It was a happy idea of the Sahitya Akademi to organize the publication of historical studies of the literatures of our various languages in India. One of the principal functions of the Sahitya Akademi is to encourage all these great languages of India and to bring them closer to each other. Their roots and inspiration have been much the same and the mental climate in which they have grown up has been similar. All of them have also faced the same type of impact from Western thought and influence. Even the languages of Southern India, with their different origins, have grown up in similar conditions. It may, therefore, be said that each of these great languages is not merely the language of a part of India, but is essentially a language of India, representing the thought and culture and development of this country in its manifold forms.

It may not be possible for many of us to have a direct acquaintance with the literatures of our various languages.

But it is certainly desirable that every person of India who claims to be educated should know something about languages other than his own. He should be acquainted with the classics and the famous books written in those languages and thus imbibe into his being the broad and many-sided bases of India's culture.

In order to help in this process, the Sahitya Akademi has been bringing out translations of well-known books from each of our languages into others and is sponsoring these histories of Indian literatures. The Akademi is thus widening and deepening the basis of our cultural knowledge and making people realise the essential unity of India's thought and literary background.

In the old days, Sanskrit, with its depth, richness and magnificence, overshadowed and prevented the growth of our regional languages. Later, Persian also rather came in the way of this growth. In Europe, Latin and Greek had played this role in regard to the national languages of European countries and it was only gradually, at the time of the Renaissance and later, that the national languages began to grow. Sanskrit had obviously a far deeper hold on the Indian mind than Latin or Greek could have on the European mind. It was of the soil and intimately tied up with the faith, the traditions, the mythology and the philosophic background of the race.

This perhaps explains the delay in the full development of our national languages. And yet it is interesting and a little surprising to find how far the beginnings of our present-day languages of India go back. Tamil, of course, stands by itself and goes back to a remote period. In reading Professor Sen's book, I have been interested in this gradual emergence of the Bengali language from Prakrit and Apabhramsa. As usual, we find at the beginning devotional and lyric songs and mystical poetry, followed by narrative poetry. Gradually literary prose develops, and drama and, finally, fiction. Professor Sen gives many details about past

writers. What I have been interested in is the broad sweep of the progress of the Bengali language and, especially, in its development during more or less recent times when it was reacting to Western influences. Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and, in a somewhat different line, Kazi Nazrul Islam stand out as peaks in this story of development. But towering above others came that remarkable family which was great in literature, painting, music and every form of art—the Tagores.

For most of us from outside Bengal, the name of Rabindranath Tagore is almost synonymous with the high achievement of Bengali literature. People of my generation grew up under the influence of his tremendous personality and were consciously or unconsciously moulded by it. Here was a man like an ancient Rishi of India, deeply versed in our old wisdom and, at the same time, dealing with present-day problems and looking at the future. He wrote in Bengali, but the scope of his mind could not be confined to any part of India. It was essentially Indian and, at the same time, embraced all humanity. He was national and international, and meeting him, or reading what he wrote, one had the feeling, which comes but rarely, of approaching a high mountain peak of human experience and wisdom.

For all his greatness, Rabindranath was not a person who lived in an ivory tower. He accepted life and wanted to live it fully and, in a sense, all his activities had something to do with life. As he wrote to a friend, "truth is good and wholesome if it is connected in some way or other with the life of man."

Tagore also, probably more than others, helped in the process described by Professor Sen as bridging the gulf between the language of the pen and the language of the tongue. That lesson has yet to be learnt by many writers in India. A great literature has to be understood by the

people and not remain pedantic, mysterious and difficult to understand.

I commend this book to all those who are interested in Indian literatures.

Circuit House,
Dehra Dun.
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Jawaharlal Nehru

PREFACE

In the following pages I have attempted to give a brief but essentially complete survey of literary activities in Bengali since the appearance of that speech. My *terminus ad quem* is 1941, the year when Rabindranath Tagore died and when the second world war was knocking at our door. In the introductory chapters linguistic and literary affinities of New Indo-Aryan speeches (of which Bengali is one) have been sketched and the origin and development of the Bengali language as well as of the Bengali script has been given in outline.

The treatment has been objective throughout and while writing the book I had never forgotten that it is meant for the general reader who may not know any Bengali.

I am profoundly thankful to Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, President of Sahitya Akademi, for writing the Foreword.

S. S.

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EVOLUTION OF THE LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

BENGALI belongs to the easternmost branch, called Aryan or Indo-Iranian, of the Indo-European family of languages. Its direct ancestor is a form of Prakrit or Middle Indo-Aryan which had descended from Sanskrit or Old Indo-Aryan. Sanskrit was the spoken as well as the literary language of Aryandom until *circa* 500 B.C., after which it remained for nearly two thousand years the dominant literary language as well as the *lingua franca* among the cultured and the erudite throughout the subcontinent. Sanskrit has always been a potent influence in the evolution of Indo-Aryan through all its stages of linguistic and literary history.

By the fifth century B.C. Indo-Aryan (i.e. Sanskrit as spoken by the masses) had developed dialectal characteristics, and by 250 B.C. its structure had completed certain definite changes. The structural change was such that the language now presented a phase that was different from Old Indo-Aryan, although there was as yet no question of mutual unintelligibility. This new phase of Indo-Aryan is called Middle Indo-Aryan, or in a broad sense Prakrit.

The edicts of Aśoka (*circa* 250 B.C.) are the oldest known records of contemporary spoken Aryan languages in India, and these records present the Middle Indo-Aryan language in the four regional varieties or dialects, viz. north-western, south-western, east central and eastern. These regional dialects, themselves changing in course of time, continued as the spoken languages of Aryan-speaking India for more than a thousand years, until they underwent another drastic change of character and developed into the several New Indo-Aryan languages we speak now.

The Middle Indo-Aryan language (or dialects, to be precise) naturally did not remain static like Sanskrit during its history of a millennium and a half. In its earliest

form, as seen in the epigraphical records belonging to the pre-Christian centuries, Middle Indo-Aryan looks like a mutilated and simplified form of Sanskrit, and its dialects were not so sharply differentiated from one another as to become mutually unintelligible. Epigraphical records in the pre-Christian centuries are all written in Middle Indo-Aryan. For the first two centuries after Christ, Middle Indo-Aryan continued to be used almost exclusively as such, but in these records a growing influence of Sanskrit diction is progressively noticeable. This indicates that the Middle Indo-Aryan was then fast receding from the Old Indo-Aryan pattern and that the Middle Indo-Aryan dialects were then becoming mutually unintelligible. By A.D. 400 Sanskrit became the supreme language and by this time some of the regional Middle Indo-Aryan speeches, the Prakrits of the old grammarians, had developed a rigid literary form.

But long before that, Middle Indo-Aryan had evolved a powerful literary language under the overall influence of Sanskrit. This is Pali of the southern Buddhists. It is based on a western or west-central dialect. But outside of Buddhism a simpler form of it was used as a kind of *lingua franca* from one end to the other of Aryan-speaking India. This common literary language appears in the Udayagiri cave inscription of Khāravela (first century B.C.) at Bhuvaneswar in Orissa. It seems to have been developed in Malwa (Ujjain-Bhilsa region) which was a centre not only of commerce and foreign contact but was a hub of religion and culture as well. Speakers of the different Middle Indo-Aryan dialects and of other languages from and outside India assembled here so that there was a necessity and urgency for the evolution of a common Indian language. It may be remembered in this connection that Pali, especially in its later phase, was used by persons whose mother-tongue was not Indo-Aryan.

Dravidian has always been the other most important linguistic stock in India. A very large number of Sanskrit

vocables came from Dravidian, and the influence of the latter in the structural development of the former is far from negligible. It is quite conceivable that it was the impact of the Dravidian speeches that largely conditioned the change of Old Indo-Aryan to Middle Indo-Aryan. It is an admitted fact that the influx of Dravidian words in Sanskrit was the largest during the few centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, and this was the formative period of Middle Indo-Aryan. The Dravidian influence therefore was inherent in Middle Indo-Aryan, and Bengali as well as its sister Indo-Aryan speeches show the impact of Dravidian mainly as an inheritance.

The influence of the third linguistic stock, Austro-Asiatic, was no less significant than that of Dravidian, although in Indo-Aryan the extent of this influence has not yet been fully gauged. There was obviously a large borrowing of essential vocables, but the absence of any literary record of the Austro-Asiatic speeches of India stands in the way of a precise estimation of its influence on the phonology and grammar of Indo-Aryan. Nevertheless in the contents of Indo-Aryan literature, especially in the motifs of folk-tales and of some important myths, the existence of a substantial Austro-Asiatic substratum is undeniable.

The fourth linguistic stock in India is Tibeto-Chinese. Its influence in Indo-Aryan is confined to the borrowing of a very limited number of words. On the New Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the regions nearest to the foothills of the Himalayas the impact of the Tibeto-Chinese has been considerable. But here also, except in Assamese and in some contiguous dialects of Bengali where the phonology was somewhat affected, the structure of Indo-Aryan remains unchanged.

The development of Indo-Aryan from its earliest form to the latest shows the following strata:

A. Old Indo-Aryan: (i) spoken, (ii) literary (Vedic and

classical Sanskrit), and (iii) mixed Sanskrit.

B. Middle Indo-Aryan, evolved out of the spoken Old Indo-Aryan and showing three stages: (i) Primary Middle Indo-Aryan recorded in the Aśokan and other early inscriptions, and Pali ; (ii) Secondary Middle Indo-Aryan or the Prakrits, represented by Māhārāṣṭrī, Śaurasenī, Paiśācī, Ardhamāgadhī and Māgadhī ; and (iii) Tertiary Middle Indo-Aryan represented by Apabhraṃśa and its later phase Laukika or Apabhraṣṭa (Avahaṭṭha).

C. New Indo-Aryan evolved out of Apabhraṃśa and Laukika and represented by the modern Indo-Aryan speeches such as Assamese, Avadhi, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Maithili, Nepali, Oriya, Panjabi, Rajasthani, Sindhi, etc.

Like Sanskrit, Apabhraṃśa-Avahaṭṭha was a literary language, and in the available records it shows remarkably little local variation ; practically the same form of the language appears in poems written in Gujarat and in Bengal. But the spoken language conditioned by the regional linguistic and ethnic environments took up the different regional characteristics, culminating in the birth of the different regional New Indo-Aryan languages. The emergence of these New Indo-Aryan speeches was not all synchronized. But some of them, including Bengali, certainly originated by the middle of the tenth century at the latest.

SINCE its origin from Apabhraṃśa-Avahaṭṭha, the Bengali language has passed through two successive stages of development which may be called Old and Middle Bengali. It is now in its third or modern stage. The Old Bengali stage roughly covered the period 950-1350. The Middle Bengali stage stretched from 1350 to 1800, and the modern Bengali

stage has commenced from 1800. The Middle Bengali stage presents two distinct strata, the early and the late. The early Middle Bengali period was 1350-1500 and the late Middle Bengali period 1500-1800. The main features distinguishing the late Middle Bengali from the early are: (i) the creation of plural case-endings of nouns and pronouns, (ii) disappearance of the distinction of number in the finite verb and creation of the periphrastic tenses, and (iii) admission of a large number of Persian words.

During the entire Middle Bengali period we find a distinct poetic language or jargon that was cultivated almost exclusively by the Vaishnav lyric poets. This poetic language or *Kunstsprache* is called Brajabuli, meaning the language of Vraja (Brindavan) and it was by no means exclusively used by the Bengali writers. The Vaishnav poets from Assam and a few devotees from Orissa also wrote in Brajabuli. The language has as its basis the tradition of Avahaṭṭha poetry strengthened by the pattern of early Maithili poets like Umāpati and Vidyāpati who were among the first to cultivate the diction. There was no doubt the influence of the local language, but that influence emerged only towards the end of the Middle Bengali period. The vogue of Brajabuli did not die out with Middle Bengali. With the strong tradition of Vaishnav poetry it lingered throughout the nineteenth century. Its last great writer was the young Rabindranath Tagore. The most fruitful of his earliest attempts in lyric composition are the songs written in Brajabuli and bearing the signature 'Bhānusiṃha'.

For old Bengali the only records are the mystic *caryā* songs discovered in a MS from Nepal by Haraprasad Shastri, a few fragments of such songs and verses quoted in some old texts and commentaries, some four hundred words occurring in Sarvānanda's commentary on *Amarakoṣa* and a few place-names and stray words occurring in the copper-plate grants dating between the ninth and the thirteenth century.

The language of the *caryā* songs betrays some lingering

traces of Avahaṭṭha, but that is not at all unexpected. Avahaṭṭha was besides Sanskrit the only other literary language of the day, and some of the writers of the *caryā* songs wrote also in Avahaṭṭha (and in Sanskrit too).

The language of the *caryā* songs is basically vernacular, but at the same time it is also something of a literary language. The main dialect seems to have been that of West Bengal, but there are ample traces of dialectal variation, indicating that the writers did not all belong to West Bengal.

Middle Bengali as a whole appears as a pan-Bengali literary language based mainly on the dialect of West Bengal. But the early writers hailing from the different parts of the country and its fringes did not hesitate to use their own dialectal forms and idioms. For instance, some of the most influential followers of Chaitanya came from Sylhet and Chittagong, and through their writings a good number of words from the dialects of those regions were introduced in the written language. There was a steady flow of Sanskrit words (apart from those inherited, which form the basic part of the vocabulary of the language) and these came generally *via* the popular mythological and epic stories that formed some of the main themes of Middle Bengali literature. Continued borrowing from Sanskrit no doubt strengthened the literary language but at the same time it was accentuating its separation from the spoken tongue.

At first the divergent tendency was somewhat checked by the slow but increasing percolation of Persian (including Arabic and some Turki) words in the language, and this kept the written and spoken forms of the language near to each other. So long as Bengal remained an independent kingdom the Persian borrowings were confined to essential words and therefore limited in number. But from the later part of the sixteenth century when Akbar annexed the country to his empire there remained no longer any barrier to the flow of such foreign words into the Bengali vocabulary.

The administration was now mainly in the hands of

Muslim officers from Delhi and Agra, who naturally cared little for the culture of the province and nothing for its language. Persian was the official language of administration, law and commerce. Agra and Delhi directed the fashion of the ambitious and the *elite,* and inter-provincial communication and commerce were considerable and uninterrupted. The inflow of Persian words was accelerated till the middle of the eighteenth century when the English took over the administration of the province. But by that time Bengali had acquired more than two thousand more or less essential foreign vocables, developed even a case-ending or two out of Persian (and Arabic) and evolved a documentary prose style that was as much Bengali as Persian. Now English words, at first only those very necessary in business and administration of law, began to be adopted in Bengali, but the position and influence of Persian was not impaired until the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, 1838 to be exact, when Bengali and English replaced Persian in the field of law, revenue and administration.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries another European language had contributed not a few words that became essential vocables in Bengali. This was Portuguese. The Portuguese traders and adventurers brought many new commodities in India, and these commodities with their Portuguese names came to stay permanently. The Portuguese missionaries brought Christianity in Bengal, and naturally there came in a number of Portuguese words relating to the Church and worship, used by the Bengali followers of the Catholic faith. But excepting two, *girjā*—church, and *pādri*—Christian priest, such words were not adopted in the general vocabulary of the language.

With the consolidation of the British power and spread of English education English began to exert an increasing influence on Bengali. This influence is evident mainly in two directions: one, adoption of English words which had no synonyms or near-synonyms in Bengali or the objects

signified by the words were unknown in the land; two, development of a Bengali literary prose style under a not very direct influence of the English language and literature. There can be no question of conscious imitation or borrowing here, but modern Bengali prose possesses many idioms, turns and twists of expression which were undoubtedly induced by the thought-pattern of English.

There are four main regional dialect groups of Bengali clearly noticeable from the seventeenth century. These are: (i) the dialects of West Bengal proper; (ii) the dialects of North Bengal; (iii) the dialects of North-east Bengal, to which Old Assamese was once closely connected; and (iv) the dialects of East and South-east Bengal. Between the first two the difference is not always very sharp. It is quite probable that originally a single dialect was spoken over West and North Bengal. The third dialect group shows a probable impact of the neighbouring non-Aryan speeches. The sub-dialect of South-east Bengal, however, shows considerable impact of the Tibeto-Burman speeches on its peculiar phonetic development. The sub-dialect of East Bengal indicates some affinity with the dialect of West Bengal as there was continuous migration of the upper class people from the west to the east.

Bengali at the present day has two literary styles. One is called 'Sādhubhāṣā' (elegant language) and the other 'Calitbhāṣā' (current language). The former is the traditional literary style based on Middle Bengali of the sixteenth century. The latter is practically a creation of the present century, and is based on the cultivated form of the dialect (the standard colloquial) spoken in Calcutta by the educated people originally coming from districts bordering on the lower reaches of the Hooghly. The difference between the two literary styles is not very sharp. The vocabulary is practically the same. The difference lies mainly in the forms of the pronoun and the verb. The Sādhubhāṣā has the old and heavier forms while the Calitbhāṣā uses the modern

and lighter forms. The former shows a partiality for lexical words and for compound words of the Sanskrit type, and the latter prefers colloquial words, phrases and idioms. The Calitbhāṣā was first seriously taken up by Pramatha Chaudhuri at the instance of Rabindranath Tagore during the early years of the first World War. Soon after Tagore practically discarded the Sādhubhāṣa, and Calitbhāsā is now generally favoured by writers who have no particular fascination for the traditional literary style. The Sādhubhāṣā is always easy to write but it is somewhat faded in signification and jaded in rhythm.

THE Bengali script, like all other Indian scripts, originated from the Brāhmī alphabet of the Aśokan inscriptions. The old Maurya alphabet of the Aśokan inscriptions shows two varieties, the northern and the southern. From the northern Brāhmī was developed the Northern Indian Alphabet of the Gupta empire. This alphabet had an eastern variety which appears in the Dhanaidah copper-plate inscription of the time of Kumāragupta (A.D. 432), the oldest of such records found in Bengal. The next stages of development of this eastern alphabet are to be found in the Khalimpur grant of Dharmapāla (latter half of the eighth century) and the Bangarh grant of Mahīpāla (latter half of the tenth century). The letters of the latter inscription can be rightly called proto-Bengali. The fully articulated Bengali alphabet appears in the twelfth century, for instance in the Tarpandighi grant of Lakṣmaṇasena and in the Cambridge MSS of *Yogaratnamālā* and *Pañcarakṣā* (A.D. 1200). Thus it appears that the evolution of the Bengali script almost synchronized with the evolution of the Bengali language.

After the twelfth century, the Bengali alphabet underwent normal development; i.e. there were changes that were bound to happen in regard to the material (first palm-leaf, then paper) and ease of writing. Up to the end of the

eighteenth century there were so to say two styles of writing, the ornamental and the ordinary. The ornamental style was cultivated by the professional scribes who prepared records and documents and by Brahmin scholars when they made copies of valued texts. The ordinary style appears in the bulk of the Bengali MSS belonging to the seventeenth century and later. The ornamental style was bound to be archaic ; it was practically identical with the Maithil script, and its original connection with Nāgarī is by no means obscure. The curious reader may compare the older style of writing found in the MS of *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan* (copied in the seventeenth or the eighteenth century) with the Nāgarī MS of Somasundarasūri's *Bālāvabodhanī* (copied in 1456 ; see *Ṣaṣṭiśataka,* Baroda, 1953).

The Bengali alphabet in its present printed form took shape in 1778 when printing types were first cast by Charles Wilkins. There still remained a few archaic forms and these were finally replaced in the middle of the nineteenth century.

2

THE PRE-VERNACULAR BACKGROUND

WE know that in its earliest phase Middle Indo-Aryan, the direct descendant of spoken Old Indo-Aryan, did not differ materially from its parent and that on the whole the early Middle Indo-Aryan presented a picture that was very close to the simpler, spoken form of Sanskrit. The use of the current Middle Indo-Aryan speeches, however, appears only in the epigraphical records, beginning from the Aśokan Edicts of the third century B.C. down to the official documents of Shan-Shan (Chinese Turkistan) in the third and fourth centuries A.D. This use of the current speech for administrative purpose was not very long-lived in India proper, except in the north-western region. Sanskrit soon began to emerge as its rival. But the struggle between the classical language and the popular speech was protracted, and the first epigraphical record in Sanskrit, the Junagarh rock inscription of Rudradāman (second century A.D.), is a solitary achievement. Nevertheless the influence of Sanskrit on documentary Middle Indo-Aryan is already patent in the inscriptions of the first century B.C. The Kalinga king Khāravela's inscription at Udayagiri shows a Middle Indo-Aryan literary style entirely modelled after Sanskrit and closely resembling Pali.

Outside the early epigraphical records the Middle Indo-Aryan languages are purely literary products, more or less overshadowed by Sanskrit. These literary Middle Indo-Aryan speeches were at first employed vigorously by the heterodox religious sects such as Buddhism and Jainism. But Sanskrit was not entirely ignored. Some schools of Buddhism employed only Sanskrit, and others used a hybrid speech, a curious mixture of Old and Middle Indo-Aryan, known as Buddhistic (hybrid) Sanskrit. The Hīnayāna Buddhists of the Theravāda school cultivated Pali almost

exclusively. The Jains wrote in Ardhamāgadhī and later also in Apabhraṃśa.

Pali is based on a midland dialect. It is no doubt a *Kunstsprache* that was originally cultivated mostly by writers speaking an alien tongue. Nevertheless early Pali poetry contains some thinly disguised specimens of early Middle Indo-Aryan popular poetry. A good instance is *Dhaniya Sutta* which is a dialogue between Dhaniya, a prosperous farmer, and the Buddha, recounting the superiority of the spiritual good over the earthly. The structure of the poem echoes the style of the dialogue hymns of the Rigveda. The first two verses are translated below:

Dhaniya: My rice pot is boiling; my cows are milked; I live for generations on the bank of Mahī; My cottage is well thatched; the sacred flame is kept alight. Now, (Rain-)god, you may pour as much as you like.

The Buddha: I am free from anger; my passion is gone; I stay only for a night on the bank of the Mahī; I have no thatch over my head; the fire in me is quenched. Now, (Rain-)god, you may pour as much as you like.

Pali poetry has preserved in an older form the didactic stories that were forerunners of the ancient stories of *Pañcatantra*. The Buddhist compilers or editors imparted to these didactic tales a sectarian colouring by identifying the heroes of each and every tale with the Buddha in one of his previous births or incarnations as animal or man. As such these tales are known in Buddhist literature as 'Jātaka', i.e. the birth (of the Buddha) stories.

Some of the older schools of Buddhism used a hybrid language, Buddhistic Sanskrit, in their early texts; the most notable of such works are *Mahāvastu* and *Lalitavistara*. In

the former we find relics of older versions of some of the old Pali poems of *Suttanipāta* and of some of the Jātaka stories. The metrical portions of *Lalitavistara* are remarkable for the language and the metre, which both show close affinity with Apabhraṃśa.

The only specimen of free composition in Middle Indo-Aryan is a three-lined verse written in an eastern or east central dialect entirely agreeing with Māgadhī of the Prakrit grammarians. It is found inscribed on a wall in a cave in the Ramgarh hills in the whilom Sarguja State. The verse is in the Vedic Jagatī metre, and it is a forlorn lover's spontaneous outburst. It reads thus in translation:

> Sutanukā by name, a temple dancer ;
> A man from Banaras loved her—
> Devadinna by name, a coin tester.

From the script it is inferred that the inscription belongs to the third century B.C.

The Prakrits never had a common literary form that could be used throughout Aryan-speaking India. But Apabhraṃśa, which is generally believed to have been a later phase of the Prakrits but in reality was the genuine representative and the pan-Indian form of Middle Indo-Aryan, was used practically in the same form in Northern India end to end. It cannot be denied that Apabhraṃśa had local variations, but as a humble rival of Sanskrit the literary Apabhraṃśa was an all-India speech.

The Jains of Gujarat and Rajputana were enthusiastic, indefatigable and voluminous writers of Apabhraṃśa poetry. Their works are Puranic in form and sectarian in spirit. In western India Jaina tradition was mainly responsible for the continuity of Apabhraṃśa (and its late and vernacularized form 'Piṅgal') long after the emergence and establishment of New Indo-Aryan in these regions. The Apabhraṃśa tradition was so strong here that even some Muslim writers were tempted to attempt love poetry in it.

The earliest writer of pure Apabhraṃśa verse, so far as we know, was Kālidāsa, if indeed the rhymed songs in his *Vikramorvaśīya* are not spurious. The best specimens of Apabhraṃśa poetry is to be found in stray verses, some of which were collected by Hemacandra (twelfth century) as illustrations of the rules of his Prakrit grammar. Such verses belonged to a common literary stock of Indo-Aryan. The following verses in translation would illustrate the pithy poignancy of late Apabhraṃśa lyric poetry.

> Days gallop in and out, and hopes and desires fall back. Be thankful for what is here. Do you not drag your existence on mere expectations.
> If and when I meet my beloved I shall do what no lover had done before. Like water in a fresh earthen pot I shall soak myself into his person.

The form of Apabhraṃśa which appears as the literary vehicle of popular poetry in the first few centuries of the second millennium of the Christian era, from Sindh and Gujarat in the west right up to Bihar and Bengal in the east, was in fact proto-New Indo-Aryan, and often called Laukika (i.e. popular) by contemporary writers. The vogue of Laukika persisted long after the emergence of the New Indo-Aryan vernaculars, but the language could not escape the ever-growing influence of the latter. This vernacularized Laukika was known as 'Avahaṭṭha' as against the contemporary vernaculars which were known as Deśi (i.e. regional) speeches. A good collection of popular Avahaṭṭha poetry produced in the eastern regions is *Prākṛtapaiṅgala,* a book (compiled probably in the early fifteenth century) on Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa prosody. The following would illustrate the lyric excellence of some of the verses collected in this work.

> He, my lover, is far away beyond the horizon. The rains are come and my heart is now in a flutter.

> The mangoes are putting forth tender blossoms. Yonder the grove of creepers entwining the silk-cotton tree is aflame with flowers. Despite this if you, O my beloved, go far away there should not have been such a thing as love nor a season like spring.

THE pundits had always used Sanskrit. But not long after the days of Kālidāsa Sanskrit literary works often became glaring instances of grammatical, lexical and metrical acrobatics and verbiage, and after Bhavabhūti Sanskrit drama generally shows drab imitation. Sanskrit literary prose was killed in the promise by the brilliant *tour de force* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. As sustained literary effort in Sanskrit was now getting more and more difficult on account of the rapidly widening gulf between the classical language and the spoken tongue the less ambitious and more sensible writers found it convenient to handle the isolated and compact form of the four-lined verse (*Śloka*). The best achievements of neo-classical Sanskrit poetry are to be found in such isolated verses in the two earliest and best anthologies that were compiled in Bengal, *Kavīndravacanasamuccaya* and *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*.

The literary activity in Bengal is presumably as old as the day of the first settlements of the Aryan-speaking people from the west. The earliest known specimen of recorded speech in Bengal is a short and mutilated inscription on a stone plaque found in north central Bengal. The language is the eastern variety of early Middle Indo-Aryan. The script shows the Brāhmī characters of the days of Aśoka. That the document originally belonged to north Bengal is proved by the mention of the Puṇḍra City (i.e. Puṇḍravardhana). The next record is a short inscription in Sanskrit, dedicating to Vishnu a cave on the top of a hill (Susunia) near Bankura in West Bengal. The donor was a local king who, on the evi-

dence of the script, is assigned to the fourth century A.D. Epigraphical records in the form of copper-plate grants endowing temples and monasteries or bestowing lands on pious Brahmins from the west are available from the fifth century. A distinct literary flavour however appears for the first time in the grants of the Pāla kings. As a matter of fact, the copper-plate grants of the Pālas and of their contemporaries and successors in Bengal and Assam contain a number of verses showing flashes of real poetic fancy. This is not unexpected as these kings commissioned their best court poets for the drafting of the literary and panegyrical sections of the documents.

Literary Middle Indo-Aryan was not much cultivated by the eastern writers who were devoted to Sanskrit. The Easterners' pronunciation of the common Indo-Aryan sounds markedly varied from the normal pronunciation of the midland and of the west. This made the Eastern speech stand apart from the rest of the Middle Indo-Aryan speeches. The poet Rājaśekhara (ninth century) testifies that the people of the regions to the east of Banaras read Sanskrit fluently but their Prakrit was not good. Still it will be wrong to hold that no remarkable literary contribution in Apabhraṃśa was made in Bengal. The most notable writers of Laukika (Avahaṭṭha) poetry in Bengal were the masters of the mystic cults, the Siddhācāryas, who were also the first to write songs in a New Indo-Aryan speech, i.e. Bengali. Somewhat earlier in date are the Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa and Laukika riddle verses quoted by Dharmadāsa, a Buddhist pundit.

Bengal (including Assam, the contiguous parts of Orissa and much of eastern, southern and northern Bihar) became a distinct regional unit only after the establishment of the Pāla dynasty in the eighth century. Just before the Turki impact, during the reign of Lakṣmaṇasena the last Hindu King to rule over all Bengal, the country offered the last and most important contribution to neo-classical literature. I mean Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*. It is this poem, or rather

twenty-four songs in it, that can claim to be one of the main fountainheads of not only Bengali but also of other New Indo-Aryan lyric poetry (apart from some scattered verses). Jayadeva was a contemporary of Lakṣmaṇasena, probably a member of his court. His native place was Kendubilva in West Bengal, where an annual gathering of Vaishnav devotees is held in his honour to this day.

The songs of *Gītagovinda* are written in Sanskrit, but their rhythm and rhyme belong to Apabhraṃśa poetry. By injecting the tenderness and mellifluence of the popular musical lyric into the strong frame of Sanskrit poetry Jayadeva made the last attempt at its resurrection. The poem of Jayadeva served to establish the theme of the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as practically the only subject of Indo-Aryan vernacular lyric poetry for centuries. Before Jayadeva had handled the theme it was purely an erotic subject both in literary and plastic art. In *Kavīndravacanasamuccaya* (the oldest anthology of Sanskrit verse compiled some time before A.D. 1100 by a Buddhist poet from Bengal) the poems on the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are grouped under the section *Asatī-vrajyā* (i.e. love affairs of unchaste women). Jayadeva too admits it when he says in one of the opening verses of his poem:

> If you would soften your heart by talking of Hari,
> if you are curious to know the art of love,
> then listen to the sweet, soft and charming songs,
> the muse of Jayadeva.

The name *Rādhā* occurs first in the writings of some poets from Kashmir. It was originally a common noun meaning *inamorata*. Its masculine counterpart *Rādha* (meaning lover) occurs in Avestan. Prakrit or Apabhraṃśa lyrics on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa love story must have been popular in Kashmir, and a prototype of Jayadeva's songs is found in a poem by the Kashmirian poet Kṣemendra (eleventh century). Bengal came in close contact with Kashmir in the closing centuries of the first millennium A.D. when the theme

of the amorous love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was transplanted in Bengal where its growth became phenomenally rich. Jayadeva's songs exerted the greatest influence in the development of Vaishnav poetry in Mithila and Bengal. Immediate and enthusiastic popularity of Jayadeva's lyrics throughout India (attested by the host of imitations and commentaries) made their influence felt in the vernacular literatures of those other provinces that had made some advance in the development of their regional speech. The most notable instance is Old Gujarati-Rajasthani.

The mainsprings of New Indo-Aryan literature may be enumerated as follows. (*a*) Krishna-Vishnu legends of Puranic and popular origin, (*b*) *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* stories, (*c*) Puranic and popular tales on Śiva and Śakti, (*d*) legends of popular (non-Puranic) deities, (*e*) romantic love stories, (*f*) didactic verses, and (*g*) mystic (riddle) poetry of the devotional and esoteric religious cults. The last category was originally what may be called a literary byproduct, but it produced some of the best specimens of early and late New Indo-Aryan literature. It also furnished the first finished products of the vernacular lyric poetry.

The only definite contributions of classical Sanskrit to vernacular poetry are to be found in the short 'Bārah-māsā' poems and in the continuation of the imageries, allusions and some stock expressions of the late Sanskrit stray (*prakīrṇa, udbhaṭa*) verses. The 'Bārah-māsā' poems describe the joys or sorrows of a lady in company of or in separation from her lover during the twelve months of the year, and are in reality a continuation of the tradition established by Kālidāsa's *Ṛtu-saṃhāra*. Such poems are usually incorporated in longer narrative tales, but sometimes they appear also as independent poems.

New Indo-Aryan is the direct descendant of Middle Indo-Aryan in form and in content but in both it has been subjected to indigenous as well as extraneous influence. The structure of New Indo-Aryan speech shows not a few essential

modifications by non-Aryan. In literature too New Indo-Aryan shows a substantial and emergent substratum of non-Aryan traditions and beliefs. The most remarkable of the literary inheritance from Middle Indo-Aryan are the main themes, the legends of the Puranic gods and heroes like Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Śiva, the Pāṇḍavas, etc. A good portion of the non-Aryan inheritance also came *via* Apabhraṃśa and Laukika; for instance the story of the married life of Śiva, the love episodes of the boy Krishna, the story of Manasā and Behulā, the story of Mādhavānala and Kāmakandalā and other romantic love stories of a like nature, riddle poetry and didactive and educative lore. The last category contains short verses embodying useful information or simple arithmetical rules. The arithmetical rules in verse in Bengal are known as 'Āryā' from the name of the typical Prakrit metre in which they were perhaps originally composed. Some of these verses have still retained much of the old flavour in language. Verses dispensing practical wisdom, useful information and weather observations are known in Bengal as 'Ḍāker Vacan' (i.e. the wiseacre's dicta) and in Hindi as 'Bhāḍali Purāṇ' (i.e. the traditional stock of the Bhāt). Riddle verses are included in the long narrative poems in connection with the lovers' contest. The love stories have never entirely lost sight of their Middle Indo-Aryan origin. The story of Manasā and Behulā is peculiar to Bengal from where it migrated to the western border province of Bihar. Its probable existence in Apabhraṃśa may be surmised from the name Behulā which is the Laukika form of Sanskrit *vihvalā*. Some erotic topics of the Krishna legend occur in Laukika poetry.

The most notable legends of the Śakti cult in Bengal that supply the main themes of the Middle Bengali *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* poems indicate their earlier existence in Apabhraṃśa in the form of the names of the heroines Phullarā (flower-like) and Khullanā (petite). These names, like Behulā, bear the imprint of Apabhraṃśa and Laukika.

3

FORMS OF EARLY POETRY

New Indo-Aryan inherited the riming moraic metre of Laukika, which had two main forms. One had lines of 16 morae (or vowel-length units), each with a caesura after the eighth, and the other had lines of 25 morae each with a caesura after the thirteenth. The former, in double riming couplets, was known as 'Caupaī' or *Catuṣpadī* (i.e. the quatrain), and the latter as 'Dohā' or *'Dodhaka'* (i.e. the couplet). But very often both were called 'Dohā' indifferently.

New Indo-Aryan poetry (except Bengali and its sisters Oriya and Assamese) had not yet fully outgrown the moraic metrical system. The old Bengali mystic songs indeed shew the moraic metrical scheme. But even at that early stage Bengali was fast liquidating the double consonants and thereby doing away with the rigid length-value of long vowels and diphthongs. In Bengali therefore the moraic scheme was soon replaced by the syllabic scheme (where syllables generally have a uniform length-value) and so the characteristic Bengali (Assamese, Oriya and partially Bhojpuri) 'Payār' evolved out of Caupaī. This process seems to have been completed by the end of the thirteenth century.

The western languages such as Gujarati and Rajasthani (and Hindi also) retained the unriming verse of Middle Indo-Aryan. This is called 'Soraṭhā (from the place-name *Saurāṣṭra*) or sometimes by its old name 'Āryā'. Such verse written in Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa and Laukika is known as 'Gāhā' (Sanskrit *Gāthā*).

The early evolution of the syllabic metre from the moraic in Bengali brought in such mobility and strength as to put Bengali poetry in a very flourishing state as early as the fifteenth century. The basic Payār metre of Bengali possesses in full the musical potentiality of the discarded moraic scheme and the softness and fluidity of the acquired syllabic

scheme as well as the pliability of the factual prose. Long and continuous narrative poems like *Manasāmaṅgal*, *Caṇḍīmaṅgal*, *Dharmamaṅgal* and *Caitanyamaṅgal* would have been impossible in any western language with its clipped verse units of dohā, caupaī, chappaī and soraṭhā, but they became possible in Bengali only for the smooth fluency that largely made possible in modern Bengali the wealth of metrical variety and skill achieved by Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Rabindranath Tagore.

NEW Indo-Aryan poetry emerged in three types of poems: stray verses, songs and narratives. Stray verses were mostly of the popular type. The songs were generally somewhat finished products even at that early stage. The particular melodies in which the songs were to be sung were always indicated. Lines of verse varied from eight to fourteen. The second couplet was usually the refrain (*Dhruvapada*) which was to be repeated after each of the following couplets. The name of the poet generally occurs in the last couplet, which in Bengali is known as 'Bhaṇitā' from the poets' *cliché*, 'N. N. says' ('bhaṇai', 'bhaṇe'). The subject-matter of the oldest specimens of New Indo-Aryan songs are either the Krishna-Vishnu legend or mystic and ritualistic matter of some esoteric cults. There were undoubtedly songs on other legendary topics also but they have not come down to us.

The general categorical name of a literary composition of some length was *Prabandha*. This is the name by which *Gītagovinda* was called by its poet. In the west, however, narrative compositions were of three types: the historical poem, the romantic poem, and the religious poem. The first two types can be traced back directly to Apabhraṃśa or to a non-Aryan nucleus thickly coated with folk-lore. It is also partly the continuation of the stories of Old and Middle Indian epic and Purāṇa legends. Longer narrative and lyric

poems of nonreligious type in Apabhraṃśa were generally called 'Rāsau' (from Sanskrit *Rāsaka* meaning a dance song). So the best known New Indo-Aryan historical poem narrating the struggles of the last Hindu king of Delhi (*Prithvīrāja-rāsau*) takes its name.

Bengal paid more attention to the epic and religious poetry than to the historical ballad. There is reason to believe that some of the meritorious deeds of the Pāla and Sena kings were sung in poetry, but these have been lost. Except a few couplets preserved in a sixteenth century work written in mixed Sanskrit and Bengali, Bengal has entirely lost its early historical compositions. Except a solitary poem written in Brajabuli and bearing the signature of Krittivās no Bengali work was named 'Rāso' or 'Rāsa'.

The tradition of historical poetry, however, was quite living in Mithila up to the fifteenth century. One of the earliest and best compositions of Vidyāpati is *Kīrttilatā,* a vernacularized Avahaṭṭha poem in prose and verse where he records the exploits of his patron Kīrttisiṃha.

In Bengali we do not get any narrative poems other than those celebrating the activities of deities and deified heroes until we come to the seventeenth century. The frame-work of these 'religious' poems of Bengal has some affinity with the romantic narrative poems of Western Indo-Aryan. The common features of the Bengali and the western Indo-Aryan poems are these: (*i*) salutation to Ganeśa the god of success, to Sarasvati the goddess of learning, and to other deities at the beginning, followed by some account of the poet himself; (*ii*) the hero and the heroine presented as incarnations of Vishnu or of a semi-divine couple temporarily under a curse; (*iii*) description of towns, kings' courts, etc. and enumeration of trees and plants in forests and gardens; (*iv*) riddle contest between the hero and the heroine (or by any other major character); and (*v*) description of the lovers' pleasures and pains in each of the twelve months of the year ('Bārah māsā'). Before they took the

written form these tales were recited by the professional story-tellers (called 'Kathaka' or 'Vācaka') attached to the courts of rulers or to temples. The poems in their written form were chanted and sung, but even then they had not entirely lost traces of their original connection with the craft of the story-teller. Jyotirīśvara's *Varṇanaratnākara* (the sea of description), one of the oldest works in Maithil written in pure and rimed prose, is the earliest available specimen of such a story-teller's handbook. Such works supplied to the early narrative poets their technical outfit.

The non-Bengali narratives were at first written in dohā and caupaī and other moraic metres, but later on some poems were composed exclusively in dohā or in caupaī metres. For this reason such poems came to be known as *Duhā* or *Caupaī* ; e.g. *Ḍholā Mārū rā Dūhā, Mādhavānala-Kāmakandalā Caupaī*, etc. The Bengali narrative poems were written in syllabic payār and tripadī verse. The payār (short couplet) portion, which formed the bulk and which was essentially narrative, pushing on the story was chanted by the principal singer and was known also as 'śikali' (i.e. the chain of narration connecting the songs.) In this very sense the word 'pavāṛu' occurs in *Kānhaḍad-de Prabandha.* It is likely that 'payāra' and 'pavāṛu' are cognates, originally signifying the same thing (possibly from *padavṛttaka* 'stepping movement'). The tripadī (long couplet with two caesura) portion, sometimes also some payār lines, formed the songs or lyric lines which were sung by the leading singer ('Mūla Gāyana') supported by his assistant or assistants ('Dohāra' or 'Pāli') and it was known as 'Nācāḍi' (from *nṛtyavṛttika* 'dance style'), The leading singer wore a .bell-anklet and carried a chowrie in his right hand and a pair of small cup-cymbals in the left. The Bengali devotional narrative poems combine the singer's craft with that of the story-teller and of the actor, and for the introductory episode of cosmogony and related matter (which appear only in the poems devoted to the non-epic deities like Manasā, Caṇḍī

and Dharma) they are further indebted to the reciter of the Purāṇas ('Pāṭhaka' or 'Kathaka').

These early Bengali devotional narrative poems are classed as 'Pāñcālī' or 'Pañcālikā' which originally meant 'doll' or 'puppet'. The name indicates that at the beginning the devotional songs were sung and poems chanted supporting a puppet show of the story. Even now a puppet show in Bengal is accompanied by chanting of verses narrating the story and punctuated by beating of drums and cymbals. An abridged version of this is the showing of the painted scroll ('Paṭa') depicting the stories of the devotional narratives. The man showing the scroll chants the story in crude (often *extempore*) verse as he unrolls it. This popular show which obtained in West Bengal only is fast disappearing. Bāṇabhaṭṭa has mentioned such a show of *Yamapaṭa* in his *Harṣacarita.*

LIKE the Piṅgal of Rajasthani an East Indian dialect, Maithil, developed as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century a finished poetic diction based on Avahaṭṭha tradition with a good mixture of the native dialect. The earliest specimens of Maithil poetry are the lyrics of Umāpati Upādhyāya, a minister of Harasiṃha the last Hindu king of Mithila (*ante* 1324), and these songs show this diction. The songs number twenty-one and are imbedded in a short dramatic frame in Sanskrit entitled *Pārijāta-haraṇa* (carrying off of the Celestial Flower). In contemporary New Indo-Aryan literature these songs of Umāpati stand unique as finished products.

Vidyāpati, one of the best known poets of early New Indo-Aryan literature, followed in the footsteps of Umāpati in the next century. The influence of Umāpati and Vidyāpati (probably there were other poets too) crossed the borders of Tirhut. Their style and diction was carried over to Nepal which had become one of the main resorts of

scholars and poets from Bengal and North Bihar after the conquest of the latter by the Turks and the Pathans, and through Bengal to Assam. Bengali Vaishnav lyric poets of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries avidly cultivated the diction of the Maithil poets, which retained the measured rhythm of the moraic metre and pithy picturesqueness of the Old and Middle Indo-Aryan ornamental and amorous verse and turned it into a poetic language. As expected this *Kunstsprache* in Bengal was thoroughly saturated by Bengali forms and idioms, and came to be known from the late eighteenth century as Brajabuli, as if it was the language of the Vraja, the homeland of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend. In Orissa the imported diction was not fruitful as the tradition of lyric poetry was not strong there. In Assam Brajabuli thrived as much as in Bengal.

In spite of or rather because of Daṇḍin and Bāṇabhaṭṭa, classical Sanskrit did not encourage literary prose. In Middle Indo-Aryan practical and popular prose is found in the collections of folk-tales, the authors or compilers of which fortunately did not bid for high literary achievement. There was little possibility of the evolution of literary prose in early New Indo-Aryan, for the career of this literature started with songs and chanted verse and this continued till the very last of the pre-modern epoch. Nevertheless a few stray and half-hearted attempts at practical prose have been preserved in some of the early New Indo-Aryan languages. These are certainly not genuine records of the literary prose ; they are handbooks of *clichés* for the use of the novice. But in some of these handbooks and in some poems too we sometimes come across a diction intermediate between verse and prose, the riming prose (called 'Vacanikā' in Rajasthani and once also in Bengali). The earliest occurrence of the riming prose is to be found in Jyotīriśvara's handbook for the use of story-tellers written in stuccato Maithil prose. This work,

already mentioned, presents to us the earliest and longest specimens of early New Indo-Aryan prose.

It was expected that Bengali which is one of the most advanced literary speeches of the New Indo-Aryan would develop a prose literature early in her history. But this did not happen, owing to the verse-mindedness of the people and the extreme pliability and expressiveness of its characteristic metre. No need was felt for a prose style when the payār was quite adequate even for an abstruse and difficult work like *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadās.

The literary prose style in Bengali had to wait for the introduction of new thought and outlook from Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

4

OLD BENGALI POETRY AND MYSTICISM

THE only connected and copious specimens of the earliest literary productions in a New Indo-Aryan speech are the *Caryāgīti* or the Mystic Practice Songs written in old Bengali when the language was just evolving out of Laukika (or Avahaṭṭha), the proto-vernacular stage of Apabhraṃśa. The language of the songs naturally shows some features that are distinctly Laukika, and others that are common to the eastern and western New Indo-Aryan speeches at their earliest stage, but there is no doubt regarding the essential Bengali stamp on its grammar, idiom and syntax. Besides, the contents of the songs indicate that the poets were thoroughly acquainted with Bengali life and environs. No definite date can be assigned to the songs. The lower limit, however, is 1200 and the upper limit cannot be much later than 1050. The poets include two generations certainly and four generations probably. In antiquity the caryā songs are matched only by the fragments of two songs, one eulogizing the ten avatars or incarnations of Vishnu and the other on the Krishna legend, written partly in Old Marathi and partly in Old Rajasthani-Gujarati. The two songs, which remind us of the songs in Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda,* are incorporated in a Sanskrit encyclopædia compiled in 1130 at the instance of King Someśvara Bhulokamalla of the second Cālukya dynasty of Maharashtra.

The text of the mystic songs with an elaborate commentary in Sanskrit was discovered by Haraprasad Shastri in a manuscript preserved in Nepal Darbar Library. Both the songs and the commentary were translated into Tibetan in the fourteenth century. The Tibetan translation has preserved the contents of two complete songs and part of another, which are missing in the original MS. The Nepal MS presents us with forty-eight out of the fifty songs commented on.

The original anthology must have contained more than fifty, as the commentary quotes lines from a few other caryā songs; the most important of such quotations is a quadruplet ascribed to Mīnanātha.

The caryā songs follow the pattern of Jayadeva. The name of the melody is always indicated at the top and that of the poet usually occurs in the last couplet. The second couplet was repeated as the refrain. The songs usually consist of ten verse lines and only three have fourteen verse lines. The metrical scheme is moraic. There are only two metrical varieties. The bulk is composed in the verse line scheme of 15(16) morae with a caesura after the eighth syllable. This scheme, practically the same as the caupaī of Hindi-Rajasthani-Gujarati, easily developed into payār, when the moraic unit was changed to the syllabic, the final caesura absorbing one mora or syllable. The other scheme, which later developed into tripadī (the other characteristic metre of Bengali), has verse lines of 25(26) morae with a caesura after the eighth and the sixteenth syllable.

The caryā songs are believed to have been composed by some Buddhist Tantrists exclusively. But that cannot be supported by the texts. The songs incorporate the mystic practices not only of some Buddhist Tantrists but of some non-Buddhist yogis also. In Bengal Tantrism was professed by the Mahāyāna Buddhists mainly but not exclusively. There are Śaivite Tantrists certainly and possibly Vaishnav Tantrists as well. Śaivite Tantrism is echoed in the two anonymous songs describing the fatal amours of a Śavara couple and probably also in the songs of Kānha which reveal his love for a Ḍom mistress. Tantrism and yoga are both mystic cults based on esoteric practices, but there is a difference. In Tantrism austerity is not essential and companionship of women as mates is not forbidden. Yoga, on the other hand, enjoins extreme austerities and strict celibacy. The songs of some of the poets such as Lui, Saraha, Bhusuku, Dārika, Mahiṇḍā, Ājadeva and Kāmali

definitely echo thoughts and processes of yoga rather than those of Tantrism. The definite Buddhistic imprint appears only in a few names and terms, such as 'Daśabala', 'evaṃkāra', the five Tathāgatas, 'nirvāṇa', the city of the Jina, occurring in some of the songs of Kānha, 'Māra' in the sing of Mahiṇḍā, 'Heruka' and 'Buddha' in an anonymous song, 'bodhi' in the song ascribed to Cāṭila and in the song of Kaṅkaṇa, and 'tathatā' in the song of Jaya-Nandī. The tern 'śūnya' occurring in many songs was not an exclusively Buddhistic term, at least in that period. But many of the authors of the songs doubtless belonged to 'Sahajayāna', another name of the Tantric school of Buddhist mysticism pervalent in Eastern India at that time.

Three of the caryā songs are annonymous: those ascribed by the commentator to 'Vīṇā' and 'Śavara'; and at least four were written by disciples of the masters named as the authors: two referring to 'Kukkurī' and one each to 'Dheṇḍhaṇa' and 'Cāṭila'. From the use of the honorific form of the verb in the colophon ('Bhaṇitā') of the songs it can be assumed that three additional poems may be assigned to disciples of the poets named therein, viz. the song of Biruā and of Mahiṇḍā and one of the songs of Saraha. If we exclude the names 'Vīṇā', 'Śavara', Dheṇḍhaṇa, Cāṭila, Biruā and Mahiṇḍā, we are left with fourteen names of Old Bengali mystic song-writers: Lui, Bhusuku, Kānha, Kāmali, Ḍombī, Śānti, Saraha, Ājadeva, Dārika, Bhāde, Tāḍaka, Kaṅkaṇa, Jaya-Nandi and Dhāma. Among these two at least appear to be nicknames: Tāḍaka (*tāṭaṅka*) 'armlet', and Kaṅkaṇa 'wristlet'. The poetic sobriquet 'Kaṅkaṇa' was peculiar to Bengal. Two Sanskrit verses by a poet Kaṅkaṇa occur in *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* (1206). One of the best known poets of Middle Bengali literature was known as Kavi-kaṅkaṇ.

Only a single song is to be credited to each of the poets except four. Lui has two songs to his credit, Saraha four (or three), Bhusuku eight and Kānha twelve. Another song

by Dārika was obtained by Haraprasad Shastri from a Buddhist monk in Nepal. More than one *Siddhācārya* was called Kānha. It is more than likely that the twelve caryā songs bearing the signature of Kānha came from the pen of two different persons. A marked difference in the tone of the subject-matter warrants the suggestion that the three songs referring to the amours of the Ḍom girl were not written by the person who wrote most of the remaining songs. Tibetan tradition acknowledges several persons named Kānha or Kṛṣṇa. One of them was known as Biruā (or Virūpa).

Among the poets we can detect at least two generations of song-writers. Lui was the guru of Dārika. In one of his songs Kānha refers to Jālandhari as if the latter was his guru. In later tradition in Bengal the other name or sobriquet of Jālandhari was Hāḍi-pā. If this Jālandhari be the author of the commentary on *Śuddhivajrapradīpa* of Saraha, we find at least three generations of poets represented in the Old Bengali mystic songs. The real name of Kaṅkaṇa was probably Koka-Datta, and according to Tibetan tradition he was a follower or descendant of Kāmali. The poet Ḍombī seems to have been the same person as Nāḍa or Nāḍa-Ḍombī, one of whose songs occurred in the original collection of the mystic songs but was missed by the commentator. There was also a younger Saraha, a disciple or descendant of Kānha, who commented on the latter's *Dohākoṣa*. The older Saraha, our poet, has been mentioned in Tibetan tradition as the great Śavara, a master yogi and a great brahman. There were other writers of mystic songs whose works exist only in Tibetan translation. Among them mention may be made of Tīla or Kīla (a disciple or descendant of Lui), Dīpaṅkaraśrī-Jñāna, Bairāgīnātha and his disciple or descendant Sthagaṇa.

The Nepal MS of the caryās has preserved only a portion of what seems to have been a vast literary output. Some of the poets who have been represented in the Nepal MS by single poems wrote quite a respectable number of songs

and/or couplets, as can be gathered from the following titles: the master yogi (*Yogīśvara*) Śānti's *Sahajagīti*, Ājadeva's *Kāṇeri-gītikā*, Birua's *Pada-caturaśīti*, Bhāde's *Sahajānanda-dohākoṣagītikā*, etc. Munidatta the author of the commentary of the caryās known to us was not the only commentator of the mystic songs. Other commentaries are preserved only in Tibetan translations.

The writers of the mystic songs were generally known as '*Siddhācārya*' inasmuch as they were spiritual masters (*ācāryas*) and were believed to have attained the final spiritual goal (*siddhi*). Some were reputed as great yogis (*mahā-yogī, yogīśvara*), others were known as '*Avadhūta*' (literally, 'purified', i.e. washed clean of ignorance and delusion).

Strictly speaking, the caryā songs were not literary compositions in the accepted sense. They were written for a limited audience who were interested not so much in the form and diction of the songs as in their content. The songs always carry a double meaning, the outward meaning guarding the inner sense, and this *double entendre* was known as 'Sandhā Vacana', i.e. code language. The outward meaning of the songs has indeed a literary flavour, for the songs really followed a traditional pattern, but the outward sense was intended only to disguise the inner meaning which recorded the mystic practice, experience and emotion of the masters in their process of self-realization.

According to these mystics, the human body and mind form a microcosm and the outside universe, the macrocosm, is only its replica. When a person succeeds in controlling his own body-functions, when he has a perfect command over his vital and mental operations and when he has attained the blissful state of complete neutrality or equilibrium (technically called 'sahaja') by liquidating volition, he becomes truly immortal, in the sense that life and death become indistinguishable stages to him. So says Kānha in one of his songs, probably addressed to a devoted disciple sorrowing at the impending demise of the guru:

> In the state of neutrality the soul is merged into the void. So be not sorrowful at the dissolution of the elements that make up an individual entity. How do you say Kānha would not exist, when he, ever manifest, is disporting in the three worlds? Only a fool experiences grief at the annihilation of a mere appearance. Can breakers ever drain out the sea? So long as they remain in ignorance men cannot acquire the true perspective, just as the fat existing in milk cannot be detected. In this existence no one really comes in or goes out. With this attitude Kānha the yogi enjoys himself.

The authors of the songs followed a literary tradition. They were acquainted with Old and Middle Indo-Aryan which some of them wrote very well. Being mystics the make-up of their mind was predisposed to poetic fancy. So it is not unexpected that their 'practice' (*caryā*) songs, in the outward meaning of course, would not be devoid of some sort of poetry. I do not mean expression or idea only. To the common reader the real appeal of the songs lies in this that they give us a kaleidoscopic view of the commonplace, even the vulgar, life of the people of Bengal in the centuries preceding the Muhammedan contact, a glimpse which we find nowhere else in contemporary literature, nor indeed in the literature of the subsequent centuries. The caryā poets were anxious to hide the real meaning of their songs from the inquisitiveness of the merely curious and from the scepticism of the merely learned. So they camouflaged their secret thoughts and experiences by using technical words of their own and by employing imageries and allegories taken from lowly life and unenviable occupations, such as keeping a grog shop, building a wooden bridge, catching game, piracy and plunder, way-laying, illicit love-making, plying a ferry boat, wood cutting, cotton wool carding and so on. Other interesting imageries are the sorrows of a luckless young wife, chess-playing, marriage ceremony, musical performance, a

house on fire, etc. In a few songs the very old tradition of the riddle verse has been followed vigorously. A few songs are purely didactic or even philosophical. The following song by Kānha serves to illustrate a vulgar side of contemporary life, a Tantrist mendicant's liaison with a Ḍom girl.

> The three worlds have been plied through by me effortlessly ; I am now at rest in the nest of Great Happiness. How strange, O Ḍom girl, is your coquetry! Men of class are kept aside while a mendicant occupies the centre seat. My girl, you have made a pretty mess: without rhyme or reason the sap is spilled. There are some call you ugly, but experienced men cannot but nestle in your arms. Kānha says: You are a Caṇḍāla woman really, and there is no unchaste woman smarter than you, a Ḍom girl.

The following song is a chain of riddles. It is ascribed to Ḍheṇḍhaṇa by an anonymous poet, probably a follower of the master.

> My hutment stands in a populated area, but there are no neighbours. Not a grain of rice is left in the boiling pot, but lovers are always (knocking at the door). The stream of life flows on swiftly: but can milk once milked out ever go back to the teat (of the cow)? A bullock has calved while the cow remains barren, and he gives milk in pailfuls thrice daily. He that understands this, obtains the blessed realization: the thief is indeed the sleuth, (and) day after day a jackal fights with a lion. The true import of this song of Ḍheṇḍhaṇa the master is realized by the rare few.

One of the two songs of Lui, probably the oldest of the caryā poets, thus describes in terms of ordinary experience the impossibility of expressing the ultimate spiritual reality:

It is neither being nor non-being; by such experience who can be convinced? Lui says, my child, the reality is elusive; it pervades the Three Essences but its identity is inscrutable. Its colour, form and appearance are indiscernible: how then can it be found described in the various scriptures? What can I say and to whom can I make an authoritative statement, when, like the reflection of the moon on a sheet of water it is neither real nor unreal? Lui says: what should I be contemplating on? No clue of what I am engrossed with is discernible.

Some poets and their forerunners wrote songs in the older literary diction of Avahaṭṭha (i.e. proto-vernacular). These songs were used only in the secret rituals of Tantric worship, and were called 'Vajragīti' (the song of the bolt). The sacred and secret nature of the Vajragīti precluded a signature of the poet. But the melodies are indicated. The few songs that have come down to us are all invocations to Heruka, the deity of the bolt, by his beloved the Yoginī, put in the form of passionate appeal by a girl in love trying to awaken her sleeping mate. As warm love lyrics some of these mystic ritual songs ring true, as the following translation would indicate:

Arise, O compassionate master, look at my helplessness. In the union of Great Ecstasy there is the honey of love. Seek it, thou of the nature of the void. Without thee I live not. Do thou arise, O Hevajra. Dispel the stupor of the void. Let the desire of the Śavara girl be fulfilled. O master of love's sport, why dost thou, after inviting guests, remain inactive? I am a Caṇḍāla woman and not a clever one: without thee I do not find my way. Break through the magic spell. I know thy heart. I am a Ḍom girl, downhearted. Do not discard compassion.

The third category of the literary composition of the Tantric (and yogi) mystics was written in the same archaic

dialect as the Vajra songs. These are didactic and directive couplets and quatrains for neophytes. They were called 'dohā' and their collection *Dohākoṣa*. It should be mentioned here that although the verses were called *dohā*, most of them are in caupaī metre and the remaining few in dohā metre. The dohā collections (*Dohākoṣa*) of only three masters have reached us—Tilo, Saraha and Kānha. Other writers of this class whose works are known only in Tibetan translation are Lui, Kaṅkaṇa and Ratna (Nṛsiṃha). The dohā collections were commented on, in Sanskrit of course, by Advayavajra (Saraha's dohās), Amitābha (Kānha's dohās), and Mokṣākara-Gupta (Tilo's dohās). Saraha was undoubtedly the best and probably the oldest of the three poets whose dohā verses are known to us. Divākara-Canda's collection of Saraha's dohās is known in a MS copied in Nepal in 1101. This, by the way, furnishes the *terminus ad quem* of the date of Saraha. The poet must have been living a long time before, possibly a century or more, for Divākara-Canda mentions that much of the master's dohā composition had been lost.

The dohā verses sometimes echo ideas and expressions of the caryā songs, and are not devoid of charm. A touch of unconscious humour enlivens the following couplets:

> 'Let there be success',—this formula was my first lesson,[1] but by feeding only on gruel I forgot the alphabet. Now I have learnt only a single letter: but I know not its name, O my dear.

What could be safely hidden by the 'code' language of the caryā songs was not fit for expression in the dohās. So says Saraha:

> The attributes, the elements, the body, the senses and their objects, water and fire—discussion on all these I speak out in new dohā verses, and nothing is kept

[1] An Indian child still begins his first lessons with the repetition of some variation of the formula: *siddhir astu* ('let there be success').

hidden. Learned men, please excuse me. I am not playing false. But how can I utter the very secret things that I have culled from the lips of my guru? The sport of love that is manifest between the lotus and the bolt: who is there in the three worlds that is not enthralled? who is there that does not feel gratified?

The dohā verses contained much that was common matter or common expression among the different religious cults and mystic groups even in later days. The 'presentation' dohās (*Pāhuḍa-dohā*) of Rāma-Sīha, a Śaivite yogi and the 'neophyte's lesson' dohās (*Sāvayadhamma-dohā*) of an unknown Jain yogi are surely reminiscent of the *Dohākoṣas* of Saraha, Kānha and Tilo, although the former are purely didactic and therefore lack the intimate, literary flavour of the Tantrist masters.

Some of the Tantrist mystic poets had good command over Sanskrit prose and verse. Their learned works were invariably written in Sanskrit. Their sermons were couched in Avahaṭṭha verse. But their secret thoughts were expressed only in the vernacular.

Indian religious thought as a whole, and not mysticism alone, made a remarkable advance through Buddhist Tantrism. The spirit of pure devotion, the attitude of absolute surrender, and the highest reverence for the guru, which are the most characteristic features of the Vaishnav movement in Bengal in the sixteenth century, were already in evidence in the writings of some of the Buddhists mystics. The form as well as the subject-matter of the caryā songs did not die out with the disappearance of Buddhist Tantrism. They reappear with the necessary changes in the sixteenth century and later in the 'Rāgātmika' (belonging to Mystic Love) songs of Vaishnav Tantrists generally known as Bāuls (mad men). But the mystic poetry was always outside the pale of 'high' literature.

5

THE DARK CENTURIES AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE CULT THEMES

THE Turki invasion at the very beginning of the thirteenth century acted as a stunning blow to Bengal which under the rule of the Pāla, Candra, Varman, Sena and other kings had achieved a singular cultural distinction. In literature and music specially, Bengal's attainments were very distinguished. In sculpture and miniature painting her contribution was far from negligible. She had developed her own style of temple architecture. In religious and social thought, as in literature, Bengal took a lead: the Bengali school of Tantrist mysticism was the precursor of the *Bhakti* movement which inaugurated spiritual and social emancipation for the common people in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is true that the whole of Bengal did not fall into the hands of the Turk adventurers in a few years or decades. East Bengal and the fringes of North and West Bengal continued to be independent or semi-independent for a century or more. But the most important, we may call international, seats of learning and culture were the immediate victims. The fall of the great monasteries and universities of Nālanda, Vikramaśīla (founded by Dharmapāla), Taḍibāḍī, Jāgandala (established by Rāmapāla), Pāṇḍubhūmi (established by Pāṇḍudāsa) and others extinguished higher learning and advanced thought in Bihar and Bengal. The brahmanical scholars themselves did not generally live in monastaries like the Buddhist *Mahāvihāras* but they too did not fare very differently inasmuch as their rich patrons were no longer there to encourage and sustain them. On the fall of the country many of the surviving scholars, Buddhist and brahmanical, went over to Nepal, to Tirhut (which preserved its independence up to the end of the first quarter of the fourteenth century) and to the frontier territories of West, North and East Bengal. Nepal and

North Bihar, and after the fall of North Bihar in early fourteenth century Nepal alone, offered a very hospitable welcome to the pundits and poets from the south and south-east who took with them as much of their precious equipment including manuscripts as they could save.

In consequence of the atrocities directed mainly to looting of townships and to destruction of temples, monasteries and other seats of devotion and learning, which appeared as forts or palaces to the invaders, the intellectual activities of Bengal apparently came to a stop for about a couple of centuries, and as a result we draw a perfect blank for the period in the literary and cultural history of the country. Not a single line of literary composition in Bengali can be assigned with any assurance to this dark period of early Muhammedan rule, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

But when Bengal had cut off its administrative connection with Delhi and had become once again an independent kingdom, the people of the land found something like a proper atmosphere and incentive for literary and other intellectual activities. Some of the old traditions of the Pāla and the Sena court were revived at Gauḍ. The officialdom of the Hindu days that had survived the onslaught tried its best to maintain, however humbly, shadow courts of its own. The poets and panegyrists attached to such courts were all Sanskrit scholars as the vernacular had as yet no prestige in high society. When influential Hindus found honoured positions in the sultan's darbar they naturally tried their best to get royal recognition for their protégés too. This was the way how cultural and literary activity in Bengal began to assert itself slowly but surely from the beginning of the fifteenth century. But it is very doubtful how long such activity would have continued effectively had not the atmosphere of the sultan's darbar been changed by the occupation of the throne for some time by the Hindu king Kaṃsa (Gaṇeśa)-Danujamardana and his son Mahendra-Jalāluddīn. The predominantly Hindu (and Bengali) colour and tone

of the court atmosphere did not disappear altogether during the rule of the later sultans. It was as much by their own inclination as by the inducement of their Hindu ministers and officers that the sultans continued to give patronage to pundits and poets. The author of one of the oldest narrative poems in Bengali received the patronage of the sultan Ruknuddin Bārbak Shāh. From the beginning of the sixteenth century some outlying centres of administration and independent or semi-independent states began to foster cultural and literary activity. But the mainspring of literary exuberance was at once shifted from official and aristocratic patronage to individual inspiration when Chaitanya appeared on the scene.

Like all momentous events, the Turki invasion and Muslim occupation of Bengal too, were not an unmixed evil. Superstitious belief and derogatory practices were slowly destroying the initiative spirit of the people both high and low. Astrologers were preferred to army commanders when a battle was inevitable. The gulf between the upper and lower classes was widening. The Muslim impact struck a stunning blow to the self-complacency of the ruling classes and of the priesthood. The social and cultural set-up was shattered, but out of the *debris* emerged a new people. This regeneration of Bengal is personified in Chaitanya, in its strength as well as in its weakness.

The pundits and poets writing in Sanskrit were silenced but not the singers of mystic cults and the rhapsodists of popular dieties, who had no prominence. The activities of these unknown village poets and singers were not manifest at the time we are speaking of, but they emerged with finished forms in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The forms and the contents of the Middle Bengali narrative and lyrical poetry presuppose uninterrupted cultivation for centuries. The earlier efforts have not been preserved for more than one reason. Being almost exclusively 'religious' poems they were sung and chanted as

part of rituals and were often *extempore*; a permanent form was given to them only when the rituals had been accepted widely and had insinuated themselves into the higher society. It was aristocratic patronage that helped materially to draw out the polished efforts of a poet. In some cases the early tentative and inadequate compositions were subsequently absorbed in or eclipsed by the achievement of a later and better writer.

DURING the long period that has left a blank in the literary history of Bengal, indigenous myths and legends inherited from Old and Middle Indo-Aryan and gathered from the various ethnic and cultural groups began to blend and crystallize round popular deities or semi-mythical figures. A new myth of cosmogony was evolved, which is different from the Sanskrit tradition but which has an unmistakable affinity with the cosmogonic hymn of the Rigveda (10.129) and with the Polynesian myth of creation. As in the Sanskrit Puranas the Middle Bengali narrative poems on the popular deities like Manasā, Caṇḍī and Dharma invariably begin with the cosmogony associated with these cults. The poems on the Krishna legend or on the stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* never begin with this cosmogony, which may be griefly narrated here.

Before the creation of the universe there was only the void encompassed in darkness. The first impulse of creation appeared as a bubble in the void, and it gradually took the shape of an egg out of which came Dharma, the formless, speckless, original God. Now there was water everywhere in the broken egg-shell of the universe and Dharma was floating in it helplessly. Then he released a long sigh (according to a second version he yawned) from which was brought forth the Owl (or Grey Crow). Riding on the Owl Dharma began to fly around for aeons and could not come to rest. At long last he scraped off a bit of dirt from his

body and dropped it into the water, and this bit of dirt formed the triangular earth. Tired of continuous flying Dharma now came down to have some rest. From a drop of his sweat (or, from a chest bone of his) came out his spouse Ketakā the prime goddess.

Dharma then created the river Ballukā in the centre of a corner of the triangular earth and grew a banian tree by the side of the river. Leaving Ketakā for good Dharma went away to the river to do penance. The Owl followed him there, perched on a branch of the banian tree and kept watch. Meantime Ketakā was feeling strongly the absence of her husband. Her passionate thoughts emerged as Desire (*Kāma*). She sent Desire to Ballukā to fetch Dharma. The approach of Desire disturbed the mental equanimity of Dharma and his sap was spilled. The Owl collected it in an earthen pot and left it with Ketakā to be cautiously guarded as a virulent poison. Dharma's continued indifference prompted Ketakā to commit suicide by drinking the poison pot. It did not however result in her death but brought about her conception. In course of time she gave birth to three sons, the three chief gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Brahmā came out of her mouth, Viṣṇu out of her forehead and Śiva in the natural way. Not finding their father at home they asked their mother for his whereabouts. Ketakā directed them to the Ballukā. Dharma did not wish to reveal himself to the three gods and had disappeared when the brothers arrived. Not finding their father they sat down to do penance on the bank of the river. After a time Dharma wanted to put his sons to test. He came to them in the form of a decomposed cadaver floating down the river. Brahmā pushed it away in disgust. So did Viṣṇu. When the corpse floated down to Śiva he forthwith knew it to be the body of their father. But his brothers were not convinced until they were enlightened by the Owl. They now sent the Owl to find a place where the body could be cremated. The Owl came back and reported that the only

place on which nothing had been burnt before was a very small plot on the southern sea-coast, but it was reserved for the avatar of Dharma in the Kali age. On the advice of the Owl the dead body of Dharma was cremated on the lap of Śiva ; Viṣṇu supplied the fuel and Brahmā set the flame. The gods then busied themselves in the business of creating the world, mortal and divine. Ketakā was reborn as Caṇḍī, and Śiva married her.[1]

This much of the story is common. After this the tale has several sequels: (*i*) the legends of the 'Nātha' gurus ; (*ii*) the legends of Manasā ; and (*iii*) the legends of the Dharma worship. The 'Nātha' cult is so called as the names of almost all the gurus end in the word *nātha.* It is an esoteric yoga cult based on austere self-negation and complete control over the vital, mental and emotional functions. In its original form it was atheistic like early Buddhism. But it came under the influence of Saivite asceticism and Tantric yoga. In the original story Gorakṣanātha seems to have been the first Nātha guru and Mīnanātha belonged to another tradition. The two came to figure together in the same story after the influence of Śiva worship had seeped into the Nātha cult. Insinuation of Tantric yoga resulted in the acceptance of Jālandhari, Kānha and a few other historical persons among the early gurus of the cult. There is no doubt that the cult originated in Eastern India, probably in Bengal, long before the fourteenth century. But its myth and legends took definite form during the dark centuries. From Bengal the cult and its legends spread out in all directions. The split-ear ('Kan-phaṭ') yogis are known all over India—in the Punjab, in Rajputana, in Maharashtra and elsewhere. In the traditional verses of the non-Bengali yogis there are sufficient linguistic indications of their Bengali origin.

The name of Gorakṣanātha does not occur in the

[1] According to a second version Ketakā died a suttie, and Śiva collected her bones and wore them as a chaplet.

Buddhistic and non-Buddhistic Tantric tradition. It first appears in the list of the sixty-four spiritual masters (*Siddhas*) in Jyotirīśvara's *Varṇanaratnākara*. It is likely that the school of Gorakṣanātha had its ultimate origin among the people living in the Himalayan foothills, and the tribal name Gorkhā points to that. There is however no evidence for the historicity of Gorakṣanātha, but one Mīnanātha was known to the Buddhist mystics. Munidatta in his commentary on the caṛyā songs quotes a four-lined Bengali verse from a work of Mīnanātha, as translated below.

> The guru gives directions of the path to the supreme goal, that is the closing of the trapdoor on activity—the stag. A snail will not proclaim the opening of a lotus-bud, but a bee fumbles not for a drink of lotus-honey.

The earliest known work of the Gorakṣa-Mīna story is a short musical play by Vidyāpati (*Gorakṣavijaya*) written in Sanskrit and vernacular, some time about 1403.

The tradition of the Siddhas was already forming among the Buddhist Tantrists. The High Lord (*Parasvāmin*) Ratna, who was the son of a king and was named Nṛsiṃha, wrote at the instance of a female mystic (*Ḍākinī*) two works describing the glorious activities (*avadāna*) of fifty Siddhas and of thirty-five *Jñāna-Ḍākinīs*. These works were translated into Tibetan in the fourteenth century or earlier. We can take it that they contained the germs of the legends connected with Siddhas Jālandhari, Kānha, Gābhura, Cauraṅgī and others and of the story of *Jñāna-Ḍākinī* Mayanāmatī—stories that are narrated in some Middle Bengali dramatic and narrative poems.

The story of the origin of the Nātha gurus is a continuation of the cosmogony narration of the Dharma cult, occurring in the Middle Bengali poems which describe the greatness of Gorakṣanātha and the legends connected with the worship of the deity Dharma. The story of the Nātha Siddhas is briefly as follows:

From the ashes of the cremated body of Dharma (*Ādinātha*, according to the Nātha legends) originated the five cardinal Siddhas—Mīnanātha (also called Matsyendranātha, from which Hindi Macchindar, Bengali Mocandar) from the navel, Gorakṣanātha from the forehead, Jālandhari (in Bengal also called Hāḍi-pā, this name occurring also in Jyotirīśvara's list of the Siddhas) from the bones, Kānha (later Kāna-pā) from the ears, and Caurangī from the feet. These origins are obviously late, being based on folk-etymology of the names. Hāḍi-pā was so called as he had acted as a sweeper. Kāna comes not from *karṇa* 'ear' but from *Kṛṣṇa*. Caurangī was so called as he wore a garment made of four coloured (*catū-ranga*) piece of cloth ; *caraṇa* 'feet' is a faint echo of the first two syllables of his name. Mīnanātha became Śiva's disciple, Gorakṣa Mīna's, and Kāna Jālandhari's. There is no mention of the affiliation of Jālandhari and Caurangī. All the five, however, followed the leadership of Śiva, who alone possessed the Supreme Knowledge (*Mahājñāna*). Śiva's spouse Caṇḍī was eager to learn the Supreme Knowledge from Śiva. But he was not willing to impart it to a woman who might not keep it to herself. The possession of the Supreme Knowledge would make one immortal, and the purpose of the creation of the world would be defeated if it was made a common knowledge. But Śiva could not resist his wife's nagging for long. He took her to a high platform or jetty on the sea so that he could not be overheard. Mīnanātha had got wind of this and was already stationed under the jetty to receive Śiva's revelation surreptitiously. Dharma's factotum, the Owl, came to know of Caṇḍī's intention to beguile Śiva for the Supreme Knowledge. He informed the Supreme Lord who made the goddess fall asleep—which Śiva did not notice. He went on talking, and perceiving that a total silence from Caṇḍī would draw Śiva's attention to her Mīnanātha made suitable sounds at intervals. When the talk came to an end Caṇḍī woke up and asked Śiva to start speaking, Śiva knew

then that Mīnanātha had thus obtained the Supreme Knowledge. He put a curse on Mīnanātha that he would forget it in time of dire need.

Caṇḍī did not like that the Siddha followers of Śiva should remain celibate while their guru led a married life. But the Siddhas would not listen to her, and she stooped to mean tricks to awaken sex hunger in them. All but Gorakṣanātha were outwitted by her, and in consequence they were doomed to lead a life, temporary at least, according to their desires. Mīnanātha went to Kamarūp to rule there over the kingdom of women. Jālandhari joined the services of Mayanāmatī, the dowager queen of Pāṭikā, as a stable-sweeper. Kāna was sent to Ḍāhukā but his experiences there are not available. The fifth Siddha lived in incest with his stepmother.

Gorakṣanātha's resistance whipped the goddess to make further attempts that were disgusting, to say the least. There is unquestionably conscious attempt here on the part of the yogi poets to condemn women as possessing mean and vulgar motives. Caṇḍī's pride was soon humbled, but she escaped chastisement from Gorakṣanātha by the timely intervention of Śiva. Four of the Siddha followers had already dispersed. Śiva and Caṇḍī now went away to Kailāṣa leaving Gorakṣanātha free to wander about in the world of men. His regular haunt was the shade of a *Bakula* tree in Vijaynagar. One day he met Kāna there. The meeting was extremely unfriendly, but it terminated in the exchange of news about their gurus. Kāna learned that his guru Jālandhari had been buried alive by the order of Govindacandra (or Gopīcandra) the son of Mayanāmatī. Gorakṣa was informed that his guru Mīna was steeped in the pleasures and sorrows of domestic life and was at the door of death. Gorakṣa at once speeded towards the kingdom of women over whom Mīna was ruling as the only male person. Anticipating some such move from his yogi followers Mīna's queens had strictly forbidden the entrance of any male adult, not to speak of

a yogi. Gorakṣa secured a comparatively easy entrance in the guise of a *danseuse*. Coming to know that an unknown dancing girl had arrived Mīna commanded her to be brought before him. Gorakṣa was astounded to find the change in his guru. Mīna had forgotten the Supreme Knowledge and was leading a dissipated life. He was wrecked in body and crippled in mind, and his death did not appear to be far off. Gorakṣa had expected that his guru would recognize him at sight and everything would then be easy. But Mīna took him to be a dancing girl and asked her to show her performance. Gorakṣa found himself in the extremely awkward position of a disciple obliged to instruct his master and that through music and dance. He dared not reveal his identity as that would mean his immediate removal. He started his show trying his best to communicate with his guru by the beat of the drum and the jingle of the anklets. When Mīna's interest was awakened Gorakṣa began to sing riddle songs conveying high spiritual truths:

> Not a drop of water is there in the pond; why does it then overflow the banks? There had never been an egg in the nest; why do the young ones flutter therein? There is not a man in the city, but it is overcrowded with houses. A blind man keeps a shop and his customer is a deaf fellow. Let the rains cease and let fish go to the bottom of the pond. The deep sea is to be crossed over in a small dinghy.

On hearing these verses the Supreme Knowledge came back to Mīna in a flash; the master was fully awakened by the disciple. The spell of the women was at once broken. Gorakṣa returned to his seat under the *Bakula* tree in Vijayanagar and Mīnanātha established a monastary at Mahānād.

Before we resume the episode describing the activities of Kāna subsequent to his meeting with Gorakṣa the story of Mayanāmatī is to be told. In her early youth Mayanāmatī

had met a Siddha who had initiated her into mystic Tantrism or yoga. The name of her guru in some versions is given as Mīnanātha, but he seems to have been no other person than Jālandhari, who after his dismissal by Śiva had come to Mayanāmatī and lived incognito working as a stable-sweeper. Mayanāmatī was the wife of Māṇikacandra the king of Pāṭikā. After her marriage Mayanāmatī tried to initiate her husband in the path of tantra or yoga. Māṇikacandra now knew her to be a Jñāna-Ḍākinī and he became afraid of her occult powers. Before he could submit to the will of his wife he died. Subsequently Govindacandra was born to Mayanāmatī. On coming of age he was married to two very beautiful girls and began to pass his days in pleasure.

Mayanāmatī was anxious for the continuity of her husband's line. But she knew that her son was destined to be childless. The only way for continuation of the line was by prolonging the life of Govindacandra indefinitely. That could be done only by taking initiation from a Siddha yogi and practising yoga as a mendicant. She asked her son to become a disciple of Jālandhari and renounce home-life for some time at least. Govindacandra felt outraged that he a king and son of a king was asked to bow at the feet of a low-caste ('Hāḍi') stable-sweeper. She replied explaining that the word 'Hāḍi' really meant one possessing bones ('hāḍa') in the body.

Govindacandra submitted to her mother's ministrations half-heartedly. He took initiation from Jālandhari but continued enjoying the home-life of ease. He soon began to make fun of the occult powers that had come to him, a neophyte on the path of yoga. His guru came to know of this and withdrew the powers from him. The king was humbled before his wives. He was extremely displeased with his guru and had him buried alive. Kāna came to know this plight of his guru from Gorakṣa. He hurried to Pāṭikā and in the guise of a child yogi secured an entry into the

city. He came to the court of the king and overawed him by a show of his occult powers. Govindacandra ordered Jālandhari's grave to be opened. On coming out of his grave the guru wanted to face the king. On the advice of Kāna a gold statuette of Govindacandra (according to a West Indian version, a plate of split peas) was placed before the Siddha. When his look fell on it the statuette (or the plate of split peas) was burnt to ashes. This, repeated twice, exhausted the anger of the guru. Govindacandra, chastised and humbled, was fully ready to do the guru's biddings. Jālandhari now gave him full initiation into yoga. The king exchanged his royal robes for rags, shaved his head, wore a pair of conchshell earrings and other insignia of a yogi, smeared himself with ashes and left home. The subsequent activities of Govindacandra follow the usual folk-tale pattern and were moulded according to local taste and popular proclivity.

Attempts have been made to prove the historicity of the story of Mayanāmatī and Govindacandra. But the material at our disposal does not allow us to build up an historical hypothesis. We do not know whether there were any such kings as Māṇikacandra and Govindacandra at old Paṭṭikera or modern Meherakula in Tipperah. But this much can be said that the story of the early life of the Tantric mystic Bhusuku, as recorded in early Nepalese tradition, reads much like the beginning of our story. The story of Bhusuku appearing in a small Sanskrit manuscript written in Nepal in the fourteenth or the fifteenth century begins as follows:

Bhusuku whose real name was Acalasena was the son of a king Mañjuvarman. When he was being anointed as the crown prince, his mother, a Vajra-Ḍākinī, poured hot water over him. The young man shrieked in pain and asked his mother why she did so. The mother replied: 'My son, these three persons never go to heaven,—a king, a painter and a poet ; and you would have to go through greater sufferings

if you be a king. Better leave home and take initiation from the master at the monastary dedicated to the deity Mañjughoṣa.' The young prince acted on his mother's advice.

The grand tale of a mother sending away her only son, a king, from home to live the life of a wandering beggar naturally became very popular among the people who came in contact with the itinerant yogis, and it spread to the remote corners of Aryan-speaking India. This had happened long before the sixteenth century, for the story is referred to by Jaisi in his *Padmāvatī*. It is also referred to by Tāranāth in his accounts of the Siddhas and he even quoted two sentences from a Bengali original. Its popularity in Bengal in the fifteenth century is vouchsafed by the statement of a poet of the early sixteenth century. The oldest known Bengali work existing on the Mayanāmatī-Govindacandra story is a play written in Nepal in the early seventeenth century. But the poems written in Bengal belong to the late eighteenth or the early nineteenth century.

The Nātha yogis and their lay followers were considered outcastes as they did not follow the rules of the brahmanical orthodox society. Consequently their songs were not considered elegant enough for the upper classes. The result has been that Middle Bengali poets of power could not work upon one of the grandest themes of old literature of any country. It may be said, however, that the poets of the sixteenth century had a good substitute of the theme in the life of Chaitanya.

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THE story of Manasā the queen of serpents is of complex origin. The ultimate connection of the story with the legend of cosmogony connected with the Dharma cult rests on a slender thread: Ketakā is a synonym of Manasā, and the name Manasā indicates her origin in Śiva's sexual desire. Manasā seems to have been originally a lewd goddess; her incestuous relationship with Śiva is hinted at not only in

the *Manasāmaṅgal* poems but in other Middle Bengali works also. In the story of Behulā which forms the final and the most important episode of the *Manasāmaṅgal* poetry her voluptuous nature could not be entirely whitewashed.

The story of Manasā which clearly indicates the way in which various legends and myths were integrated comprises three parts: (*i*) the birth of the goddess, her conflict and reconciliation with Caṇḍī and her marriage with Jaratkāru; (*ii*) Manasā's quest for human worship, taxing first cowherd boys, then a Muslim farmer and then a fisherman family; and (*iii*) finally her recognition by Cāndo the merchant prince. The last part contains the most popular episode, the story of Behulā, which was grafted partly from folk-lore and partly from very old mythology. The story is briefly told below.

Manasā was born of Śiva's seed dropping on a lotus leaf (whence her name Padmā or Padmāvatī) and reared by the mother of the serpent-demigod Vāsuki whose people were skilled artisans (*kāru, takṣan*; Bengali 'nirmāṇi'). She was acknowledged by the serpents (*nāga*) as their queen and was given the control of their poison store. One day as she was sporting in a lake her father Śiva saw her and not knowing her to be his daughter offered his love to her. She revealed her identity to him and wanted to accompany him home. Śiva was not willing to take her home as he knew that his wife Caṇḍī would never like her. But he could not resist Manasā's entreaties and he brought her home surreptitiously. Caṇḍī soon found her out and taking her to be her husband's another wife fell foul of her. The brawl ended in a scuffle, resulting in the loss of one eye of Manasā. Domestic peace was restored on Śiva promising to banish his daughter. Śiva asked Manasā to come away with him. They left home and after a long trek came to a forest. In the centre of the forest there was a hill capped by a shady tree. They came up there and sat down to rest. Manasā stretched herself on the ground and fell asleep. Śiva took

this opportunity to slip away. At the moment of departure Śiva felt pity for the girl he was leaving helpless and dropped a tear. From the tear-drop came out the girl Netā (or Netravatī).[2] He appointed her as Manasā's chaperon and counsellor. Then he created their male guard Dhāmāi out of his sweat. Thus satisfying his conscience Śiva returned home.

There arose a trouble in the domain of the gods. The new-born calf of the divine cow Kapilā not finding a feed in time drank up the sea of the Ballukā which was the main water supply for the pious section of the gods. On the advice of Śiva the gods propitiated Kapilā who gave milk to fill up the sea. But the trouble did not end. A parrot while flying over the sea dropped a tamarind which it was fetching for a sage. The fruit was so sour that the milk of the Ballukā turned into curds. The gods were again in a fix. There was no other way but to churn the sea so that the curds would be liquified. (The story here follows the Purāṇa episode.) The good things that were churned out of the sea were taken by Viṣṇu, Indra and other prominent gods. When Śiva and the Asuras came nothing was left for them. They now insisted on a second churning, which turned up only poison that threatened the destruction of the universe. Śiva was persuaded by the gods to drink up the poison and thereby save the creation. The poison was too much for him and he fell down senseless. Manasā was called to resuscitate her father. She did it and as a reward she was given a seat in the assembly of the gods. But even a goddess must marry. She was given in marriage to the sage Jaratkāru, who left her in a few days. But a son was born. He was Āstika, and the story how he prevented Janamejaya from completing the Snake Sacrifice is also told in the *Mahābhārata*. Here ends the first or the Puranic part of the legend.

Divinity of the gods depends on their recognition by man.

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[2] This origin is probably based on folk-etymology. Netā was the name of the brahmanical Tantric demi-goddess, Nityā. (Also see p. 54).

A god is no god until he is worshipped by man. So Manasā was eager to secure human devotees. Accompanied by Netā she came down to earth and met some cowherd boys tending a herd of cattle in the meadow. She approached them in the guise of an old brahman lady and demanded worship from them. The boys took her to be a witch and pelted stones at her to drive her away. To teach them a lesson Manasā made the cattle fall into a deep water-hole. Now the boys had to appease her in order to get the cattle out of the hole. Manasā then demanded a drink of milk. As there was no pot Manasā gave them the small wicker basket she was carrying. The head boy milked the cow that had ceased to give milk and offered the drink in the basket. The goddess drank milk from it with her head held down. The cowherds were now convinced of her divinity. They agreed to worship her every year on the tenth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Jyaiṣṭha (May-June).[3] The goddess would be represented by a small pitcher filled with water and capped by a twig of the Sīj plant. The worship of Manasā brought quick prosperity to them.

But their enthusiasm for the worship of a new deity soon brought them into conflict with the Muslim farmers of the neighbourhood. Manasā did not miss this opportunity. She joined in the struggle and after considerable ups and downs she was finally triumphant. The leaders of the Muslim farmers were the brothers Husain and Hāsan. They agreed to make amends. They built and endowed a temple for the worship of the goddess. The next recruits were the fishermen brothers Jālu and Mālu. They had found a golden pot sacred to Manasā from the bottom of the river and their mother worshipped it. This brought them prosperity. Here ends the second part of the story.

The next and final objective of Manasā was a recognition from the upper class people, especially from the merchant

[3] Different summer months are mentioned in the different versions.

community. Cāndo the headman of the merchant community, was a staunch devotee of Śiva. He possessed Supreme Knowledge, and Śiva had rewarded him with a matted lock from his own head and a scarf. The possession of these things made Cāndo a formidable rival of any god. Manasā however was now experienced enough not to make a frontal attack. She sneaked through the back door. Cāndo's wife had learned the worship of the goddess from the mother of Jālu and Mālu. Cāndo at first did not know it. But it could not escape his notice for long. When he saw his wife worshipping the sacred pot he kicked it away. Manasā was offended and she tried her best to harm Cāndo in various ways but she could not succeed. Then Netā advised her to take away the gifts of Śiva and to make him forget Supreme Knowledge. Acting on this advice Manasā approached Cāndo in the guise of a young and charming woman professing to be his sister-in-law and seduced him. Cāndo lost his divine gifts and Supreme Knowledge. Manasā's serpents then killed the six grown-up sons of the merchant prince. Still Cāndo would not bend his head to the goddess. His youngest son Lakhāi (or Lakhindar) soon came of age. Cāndo found a very accomplished bride for him. She was Behulā. Fearing a deadly attack from Manasā who was determined to cut off his line, Cāndo had an air-tight steel chamber built for the newly-wed couple to pass the bridal night. But Manasā had suborned the builder who had left only a pin-point of opening. Through this the thinnest and deadliest creature of Manasā got in and bit Lakhāi mortally before Behulā had any chance of bearing the seed of her husband. The last of his line and his best beloved son thus died a tragic death, yet Cāndo remained intractable. A snake-bite casualty was deemed to be a victim of the snake-goddess. As snake worship (as a water cult) was opposed to the fire cult, cremation of the body of a person who had died of snake-bite was forbidden. Such a body was cast away in a river or stream. There was also a faint hope in the hearts

of the bereaved that the dead might somehow come to life by the ministration of an adept or by the occult powers of a religious mendicant. The dead body of Lakhāi was placed in a wooden box and set adrift in the Ballukā. As Behulā would not let her husband's body out of sight she too got into the box. In course of her way down the river she met with repeated temptations and threats of force until her float reached Triveṇī. There she watched how a washerwoman first killed her son, did her washing, then revived the child and went her way. This was Netā the washerwoman of the gods[4] and friend of Manasā. When she came back the next day Behulā made friends with her. Netā took Behulā to the divine assembly and introduced her as her niece who was a good washerwoman as well as an expert *danseuse*. Behulā was called upon to show her dance. Śiva and all the gods were highly entertained by her performance. She then told them her tale of sorrow. At the repeated request of the gods and on the promise of Behulā that she would make her father-in-law accept the divinity of Manasā, the goddess resuscitated Lakhāi as well as his long-dead brothers. They returned home and Cāndo did not require much persuasion to pay homage to Manasā in the proper form.

THE legends and rituals pertaining to the deity Dharma are of complex origin. They present a peculiar synthesis of the Vedic and pre-Vedic lore with the various non-Aryan cults and myths. Dharma is partly Varuṇa and partly Yama of the *Rigveda*; he is partly the sun god of the later Vedas and of the Iranian tradition, and he is also the primaeval god (who died after just starting the process of the creation of the universe) belonging to some pre-Vedic lore. There is enough evidence to indicate that Dharma (and his sister-consort Ketakā-Manasā, a counterpart of Vedic Yamī) was

[4] This role of the companion of Manasā is perhaps based on a folk-etymology of the name (i.e. from the Bengali word 'netā' meaning fine cloth).

once worshipped as the village deity throughout Eastern and Northern India.

The Dharma worship as performed even now in Bengal includes rites that are concerned with all the main occupations of the people, from rice cultivation to tool-making and from chanting of sacred texts to devil dance. It has preserved also the customs and manners of the royal court of the pre-Muslim days. The Dharma worship had little to do with Buddhism of any school as was first suggested by Haraprasad Shastri and accepted by others implicitly. Shastri's theory was based on two assumptions: (i) the name Dharma came from the Buddhist *saddharma* (true religion) and (ii) the image of the tortoise is a replica of the Buddhist *stūpa*. Both the assumptions have been proved incorrect. The full name of Dharma is Dharmarāja, and it is a name of Yama in brahmanical and Buddhistic traditions.

The Middle Bengali poems referring to Dharma worship are of two types. One type comprises treatises describing the rituals of worship and incidentally furnishing the traditional tales connected with its mythical history, and the other type includes the narrative poems describing the adventures and exploits of Lāusen, a legendary hero favoured by Dharma.

The ritualistic treatises (known as *Dharma-purāṇa* or *Anila-purāṇa,* or even as *Dharmamaṅgal*) begin with the cosmogony already narrated. The cosmogony section is generally called *Śūnya-śāstra* or *Śūnya-purāṇa* as it describes the creation of the universe from the void (*śūnya*). The second section narrates the activities of Dharma in search of human worshippers. His first recruit was Sadā a Ḍom who was made to sacrifice his son to feed Dharma. (The son was of course resuscitated.) The next man to worship Dharma was king Hariścandra.[5] His priest was Rāmāi Paṇḍita.

[5] The story of Hariścandra closely resembles the Hariścandra-Śunaḥśepa story in *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa*. There is little doubt that the two stories come from the same ultimate source.

The third section narrates the story of Rāmāi. Rāmāi was the son of a brahman sage who was not liked by his associates. After the death of the sage his associates and neighbours retaliated by declaring Rāmāi an outcast. Rāmāi was refused initiation by his relatives and other brahmans. But Dharma invested him with the more sacred copper armlet. Still the brahmans would not admit him into their society. As a punishment for offending his protégé Dharma caused Mārkaṇḍeya, the leader of the opposition, suffer from leukoderma (or leprosy). Mārkaṇḍeya was forced to submit to Rāmāi who was then acclaimed as the high priest of Dharma the Sun-god. The third and final section contains poems and verses used in the elaborate worship of Dharma known as 'Gājan' (from *garjana* 'shout') inasmuch as the initial ritual was a loud supplication to Dharma to wake up from sleep and listen to their appeal.[6] The whole ritual was properly called 'Bāramoti' (from *dvāramuktika,* 'opening of the door'), as if Dharma like a king would open his door and admit the suppliants to his presence. There is also an echo of the other meaning of the word 'bāra' here. The number *twelve* has special significance in Dharma worship: the sun-gods (*Ādityas*) are twelve in number.

The exploits of Lāusen are narrated in the poems called *Dharmamaṅgal.* The theme is of the nature of a series of connected folk-tales and is the nearest approach to the epic type in Middle Bengali. In content and structure there is much old material even though the oldest of the available poems does not go further back than the middle of the seventeenth century. A recital of *Dharmamaṅgal* even now forms part of the annual ceremony of Dharma worship just as the recital of *Manasāmaṅgal* and *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* were once ritualistic items in the worship of Manasā and Caṇḍī respectively. A common feature of the so-called 'Maṅgala' poems devoted to Manasā, Caṇḍī and Dharma is

[6] The Buddhist Tantric ritual of 'Vajraḍāka' may be compared.

that the climax in the tale, the longest and most exciting of the episodes, was sung and recited in a whole-night sitting on the day before the final ritual, and as such this section of the tale was known as 'Jāgaraṇa' ('keeping the night'). So says Vṛndāvanadās: 'Men keep awake the whole night in listening to the song of Maṅgalacaṇḍī.' The story of *Dharmamaṅgal* runs as follows.

Karṇasen was a vassal of the king of Gauḍ whose capital was Ramati (i.e. Rāmāvatī founded by Rāmapāla). A local Goālā (i.e. cowherd caste) chief Somaghoṣ and his son Ichāi grew strong and usurped the territory of Karṇasen. Karṇasen and his six sons supported by the king's forces tried hard to regain the territory. But favoured by his family deity Śyāmarūpā (i.e. Caṇḍī) Ichāi was more than a match for them. Karṇasen lost his six sons and was finally defeated. The king took him in charge and married his young sister-in-law to him. The king's brother-in-law Māhudyā, who was also the king's chief minister, did not approve of his sister's marriage with an old man. After his marriage Karṇasen and his young wife Rañjāvatī went away far South to Mayanāgarh which the king bestowed on them as dowry. Karṇasen was too old to beget a son, but both of them hankered after one. On the advice of her old nurse Rañjāvatī went through a course of very hard penance and thereby propitiated Dharma. By the grace of Dharma Lāusen was born to them. Māhudyā did not like the birth of a son out of a marriage not approved by him. His attitude to Lāusen was like that of Kaṃsa to his nephew Kṛṣṇa. Māhudyā sent down thieves to kidnap the baby but they failed ignominiously. Dharma rewarded Rañjāvatī with a foster child, Karpūradhaval. The two boys grew together like Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa or like Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. When Lāusen had finished his school lessons and had acquired mastery over the wrestler's and the fighter's art he was anxious to meet the king of Gauḍ at Ramati and show off his powers. The two brothers set out for the capital city

which lay in almost a straight northerly direction. They had their first adventure at Jālandār (Jālandhara?) Garh which was infested by a tiger that had killed the ruler and the people of the land. Lāusen killed the tiger and brought back the land to its old prosperity. At their next halt Tārādighi Lāusen killed a vicious crocodile. The brothers then came to Jāmati which was a stronghold of the Bārui (betel-grower) community. A woman made improper advances to Lāusen, which he promptly rejected. The woman belonged to an influential family. She contrived to have Lāusen arrested for making love to her. But a protégé of Dharma could not be detained for long. Lāusen's next camp was at Golāhāt which was the domain of a hetaera named Surikṣā. A newcomer to the place must face a contest of riddles with the hetaera. If he won he would be accepted as her lover; if he lost he would remain there as her slave. Lāusen gave the right answers to all the riddles except the last. The last question set by Surikṣā was this:

> Kāma-Caṇḍī of Kāmarūp comes to Kāmatā.
> Say what part of the body contains the sap of a woman.

This was too much not only for Lāusen but for Dharma and the other gods as well. The correct answer to the riddle was known to Caṇḍī alone. She now came to Lāusen's aid and supplied this correct answer:

> It is neither a beast nor a bird but an embryo in an egg. By a mere look it strikes mortally, but it has neither hands nor feet. It observes all but is not itself seen. It is the greatest treasure to be carefully tended. It wears vermilion paint above and collyrium below. It trembles like a tear drop. Kāma-Caṇḍī of Kāmarūp comes to Kāmatā. Leaving aside the eight limbs thy sap is in the left eye.

Surikṣā admitted defeat.

Coming to Gauḍ, Lāusen met with severe opposition

from his uncle. In spite of it he won recognition from the king and returned home triumphant. His best gain was the friendship and allegiance of Kālu Ḍom and his wife Lakhyā who came over to Mayanāgarh and settled there. At home Lāusen was not left in peace for long. Māhudyā was devising manifold ways of quelling his nephew. On the minister's advice the young man was sent on an expedition to Kāmarūp. Lāusen defeated the king of Kāmarūp and married his daughter Kaliṅgā. On his way back home he won two more wives, Princess Amalā and Princess Bimalā.

After a time Lāusen was commanded to go to the court of king Haripāl and demand the hand of his accomplished daughter Kānaṛā for the king of Gauḍ. The princess was a protégé of Caṇḍī. To prevent an undesirable match for her devotee the goddess had given a rhinoceros made of iron and stipulated that the hand of Kānaṛā would be won by him who would succeed in smiting off the head of the rhinoceros with a stroke of the sword. Kānaṛā's nurse and attendant Dhumasī also was favoured by the goddess. Lāusen achieved the feat and won Kānaṛā for himself. In due course his son Citrasena was born.

Lāusen was then commissioned to subjugate his father's old enemy Somaghoṣ and his son Ichāi. Ichāi was a special favourite of Caṇḍī. Through this struggle the Dharma worship was to win its final bout against Caṇḍī worship. Ichāi was killed only after a very hard fight with Lāusen. After this Lāusen was called to save Gauḍ from the ravages of a frightful rainstorm and floods. By the grace of Dharma Lāusen was able to do so. Māhudyā then contrived his worst trap for the liquidation of his nephew. Lāusen was now regarded as the most favoured devotee of Dharma the Sun god, and on pain of death he was asked to make a sunrise in the west. If he failed to do so his parents who were held hostages at Gauḍ would be put to death and his property confiscated. Accompanied by his mother's old nurse, an ardent devotee of Dharma, Lāusen went away to the sacred

seat of Dharma worship on the river Ballukā and performed austerities for a long time. In the meantime taking advantage of the absence of Lāusen and his parents Māhudyā attacked Mayanāgarh. The fort was manfully defended by Kālu Ḍom and his son. But they were soon killed. On the death of Kālu his wife Lakhyā came out to fight, and when she fell queen Kaliṅgā took the lead of the defending army. But she too fell fighting. Then Kānaṛā and her old nurse Dhumasī took arms and defeated Māhudyā and his invading army.

In spite of the prolonged hard penances Lāusen's prayer to Dharma for a sunrise in the west remained unanswered. The old nurse Sāmulā at last asked him to cut off his own head and throw it into the sacrificial fire as the final oblation to Dharma. Lāusen did not hesitate, and he cut off his own head to the distress of all beings that were witnessing the feat.[7] Dharma could not remain unmoved at this act of supreme self-sacrifice. He made the sun rise in the west. There were only two witnesses to this miracle, Sāmulā the old nurse and Harihar the drummer. Lāusen returned to Ramati but Māhudyā refused to believe him. Being a partisan Sāmulā was lightly dismissed as an unreliable witness. He tried to suborn Harihar but in vain. Harihar testified to the sunrise in the west. Lāusen was vindicated but Harihar paid for truthfulness by his life. With his parents Lāusen returned to Mayanāgarh where he found that most of his people had been killed in battle with Māhudyā. But by the grace of Dharma they were all brought back to life. For the remaining days of his life Lāusen lived in peace.

THE narrative poems on the goddess Caṇḍī (called *Caṇḍī-maṅgal*) contain two independent stories. The first story is the older. It originally came from Kaliṅga (North-east

[7] From their cry of grief the incident was known as 'Hākanda' (from Sanskrit *ākranda*), and this climactic episode is called 'Hākanda pālā'.

Orissa) where the goddess was a forest deity giving protection to forest animals and was worshipped by fowlers and hunters (the *Vyādha* tribes). The second story follows the usual pattern. Its hero is an influential merchant and he and his son are compelled to pay homage to the goddess who apparently had not yet obtained homage from the upper classes of the society. In the second story the goddess appears as the guarding deity of lost animals and of lost men. The first story has retained, more or less, the original simple form of folklore. The structure of the second story is complex. In its older and simpler form it was a 'Vrata-kathā'.[8] One peculiar feature of the second story is the miraculous sight, on the surface of the open sea, of a divine girl seated on a full blown lotus and alternately devouring and belching out a couple of elephants.[9] This sight brought disaster to the hero and his son. Merchants were devotees of Kamalā (Lakṣmī) who was generally represented as a lady seated on a lotus and two elephants pouring water on her. The sight which Caṇḍī made them see was definitely unlucky to the merchant community as the totemistic (?) animals were unfavourably treated and the protecting deity had assumed an antagonistic mien.

The first story is concerned with a very humble fowler family to whom the goddess gave wealth. Kālaketu lived by killing or catching game in the wild and barren land of Kaliṅga. His young wife Phullarā sold meat and animal skin in the market or from door to door and saw to her husband's meagre comforts. Kālaketu's ruthlessness in killing and skill in stalking game struck terror in the heart of the wild animals of Kaliṅga. In a body they approached their mistress Caṇḍī who granted them immunity from the net and the missiles of Kālaketu. Kālaketu was in a pretty fix. For two successive days he could not catch anything,

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[8] A Vrata-kathā is a short narrative recited in women's rites held at home and generally without the assistance of a brahman priest.

[9] This miracle is known as 'Kamale Kāminī' (the lady on the lotus).

not even a fly. On the third day too he found nothing but as he was returning home he saw a brown iguana which he had seen in the morning at the beginning of his quest. In desperation he caught the animal and brought it home.[10] Tying it to a post supporting the thatch of the hut Kālaketu went in search of his wife who was away from home. When Kālaketu had left the goddess who had taken the form of the iguana assumed the form of a charming young lady. Phullarā had gone out to borrow some rice from a neighbour. Returning home she was very much surprised to find a well-dressed and exceedingly pretty brahman girl seated in their hut. On questioning she learnt that the girl had been brought home by her husband, and that she would like to stay with them. By this time Kālaketu came back. Phullarā first fell foul of her husband and then she spoke her mind to the girl. Verbal assault proving ineffective she changed tactics and gave the latter a minute description of the chronic poverty of her home. The lady's obduracy exasperated Kālaketu too. Now the goddess was thoroughly satisfied with the honesty and integrity of the poor couple. She revealed her real self to them and asked them to institute her worship. Before departure she made Kālaketu a very rich man by giving him a valuable ring and a huge stock of hidden gold. With that money Kālaketu reclaimed a portion of the wild region of Kaliṅga and founded his capital town of Gujarāṭ. Flood-stricken people from the east and south-east came and settled in this newly found territory. One of the new-comers was Bhāmṛu Datta, a downright rogue. He was caught oppressing the poorer sections of the trades-people. Kālaketu took him to task. The result was that Bhāmṛu went to the neighbouring king of Kaliṅga and instigated him to march against Kālaketu. The king of Kaliṅga

[10] This was a desperate act, for the brown iguana was apparently the totem of the tribe to which Kālaketu belonged. Outside the temple of Konarak there is a figure of a warrior holding a shield on which a couple of iguanas are represented. The figure faithfully tallies with the description of Kālaketu in Mukundarām's poem.

attacked Gujarāṭ and Kālaketu was defeated and was caught by the treachery of Bhāmṛu. At the last moment the goddess intervened. The king of Kaliṅga released Kālaketu and instituted worship of Caṇḍī.

Dhanapati the hero of the second story was a rich merchant of Ujāni (i.e. Ujjayinī). He had no issue from his wife and so he married for the second time a young and accomplished girl named Khullanā. His first wife Lahanā was not a bad lady but she was under the thumb of her maid Durbalā who did not like a rival to her mistress. After his second marriage Dhanapati had to go away on a trading voyage. During her husband's absence from home Khullanā was put to hardship and ignominy. Lahanā on the advice of Durbalā directed her co-wife to take out goats to graze in the wild tracts outside the township. One day a goat strayed from the herd and Khullanā thought it was lost. Thinking of the kind of reception she would receive on return home she was very much distressed. The goddess Caṇḍī now took pity on her and sent down her eight attendants (*Vidyādharī*) who instructed Khullanā to worship the goddess by invoking her in a water pot and by offering eight blades of grass and eight grains of paddy. Khullanā worshipped Caṇḍī on the spot and got back the lost animal. When the merchant returned home all was well for the time being. But it was not long when the merchant came to know that his young wife had been herding goat during his absence from home. He was not suspicious of Khullanā's character but his community would not allow him rest until Khullanā demonstrated her chastity by undergoing severe tests before a representative assembly of the community. By the grace of Caṇḍī Khullanā passed all the tests with glory.

After some time Dhanapati again went away on a trading voyage to a port in Ceylon. On the eve of his departure he found his wife worshipping Caṇḍī for his safe voyage and return. Dhanapati was a staunch devotee of Śiva. He was in a rage when he found his favourite wife offering worship

to another deity. He kicked away the sacred water pot (as did Cāndo in the *Manasāmaṅgal* story). For this insolence Caṇḍī determined to teach him a hard lesson. The merchant's voyage was smooth for a time. But as he was nearing the Ceylon coast the goddess made him see the miraculous scene of a girl seated on a lotus and alternately devouring and belching out a couple of elephants. This sight was not visible to the members of the crew. He reached the port, made a very profitable exchange of goods and was received by the king. From this time his luck began to turn. He mentioned the vision of the elephant-devouring girl on the sea to the king who naturally disbelieved him. On his insistence the king agreed to go out to the sea to see it for himself. But the vision was not repeated. The king condemned Dhanapati to imprisonment for life as a very foolish liar.

Khullanā was carrying when Dhanapati left home. In course of time a son was born. He was named Śrīpati (or Śrīmanta). He grew up to be a fine lad. But as he was born when his father was away from home the legitimacy of his birth was not above suspicion. When such whispers reached the ears of Śrīpati he started on a voyage to Ceylon in search of his father. His experiences on the sea were the same as his father's about a score of years ago. Śrīpati also was unable to show the vision to the king and was condemned to death. When he was about to be executed the goddess appeared in the guise of his old grandmother. She supplicated the executioner to spare the life of her grandson. On refusal she brought in her demon army and they routed the king's guards. The king was threatened by the goddess, and he was forced to release Śrīpati and his father and marry his daughter to the merchant's son. Dhanapati and his son and daughter-in-law returned home with the boats filled with precious merchandise. He was no longer unwilling to offer worship to Caṇḍī.

The themes of the narrative poems on the popular

deities, outlined above, took shape during the dark centuries. The stories indicate the struggle and triumph of one cult (generally the new) over another (generally the old). In the story of Manasā the cult of the snake goddess appears to be pitted against that of Caṇḍī. In the saga of Lāusen the protégé of Dharma triumphs over the protégé of Caṇḍī. In the second story of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* poems the worship of Caṇḍī supercedes that of Śiva.

THE Middle Bengali long narrative poems are named after the particular deity with the addition of either of the words *maṅgala* and *vijaya*. *Maṅgala* indicates the ultimate connexion of the theme with some domestic ritual of the womenfolk such as marriage or propitiation. On the other hand *vijaya* points to the basic affinity of the story to the Purāṇa type, i.e. to *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and to the *Mahābhārata* which was classed as *Jaya*.[11] The name *vijaya* is therefore proper to the poems on the Krishna legend and the *Mahābhārata* story, and these were not cult poems. The narrative poems called *maṅgala* or *vijaya* belong to the *genre* of *Pāñcālikā* (or *Pāṃcālī*) poetry mentioned in a previous chapter.

These poems are the productions of the society. This is more true of the cult poems than of the *Purāṇa* poems. It means that the forms and contents of the poems were determined by the social condition and modified by popular predilections. Whether written under the patronage of a ruler or not the poems were meant for the masses and enjoyed, not in the seclusion of an exclusive audience but by the whole community assembled to take part in a common worship or festivity of the village deity. It is therefore inevitable that the characters of the story would be types and that a good many social customs and observations would be embodied in it.

[11] Cf. the introductory verse appearing in all Sanskrit works of the Purāṇa type (*tato jayam udīrayet*).

6

FROM THE FIFTEENTH TO THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THE most popular theme of narrative poetry that was universally appreciated, even by the Muslims, was the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* The epic tale of Rāma had many minor variations and embellishment in the different regions and among the different religious groups in India and outside. The most important departure from Vālmīki's narration appearing in the Middle Bengali versions was the genesis of Sītā from the seed of Rāvaṇa, as narrated in the Sanskrit *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇa.* The treatment of the story was always from a devotional standpoint inasmuch as Rāma worship was firmly established in Bengal before the end of the fifteenth century. Some of the leading followers of Chaitanya were devotees of Rāma. With the growth of Chaitanya's influence Krishna worship began to be accepted by the followers of the Rāma cult until by the end of the eighteenth century Rāma worship became restricted practically to the outlying regions of South-west Bengal where there was always a steady influx of the Rāma-worshipping men from the West. Nevertheless the popularity of the Middle Bengali narrative poems on Rāma chanted and sung in the traditional style never lost popularity among the massess. It is true that the Rāma story cannot be traced back to an old Bengali or Laukika version. But there cannot be any doubt of its popularity among the higher classes who preferred to hear it in Sanskrit (and also in Prakrit). Sāgara-Nandī, a Bengali dramaturgist (*ante* 1400), mentioned a large number of Sanskrit (and Prakrit) plays written apparently in Bengal and in its neighbourhood. Among these we find several pertaining to the Rāma story. From a study of the titles it appears that the Rāma story was no less popular than the Krishna story and both more popular than the Pāṇḍava story and other Purāṇic tales. In plastic art also the Rāma story maintained its popularity equally with the

Krishna story, from the twelfth century and earlier right up to the close of the eighteenth century when the latest of the Bengali type of brick temples were built. The tomb of Zāfar Khān Ghāzi (late thirteenth century) at Satgaon (Saptagrām) which was built on the remains of an old Hindu temple of stone shows some inscriptions on black basalt which are legends describing scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhāgavata*, and *Mahābhārata*. The sculptures were all scraped clean, but fortunately for us some of the inscriptions were spared before the slabs were used to build the tomb. The legends now standing are as follows: Sītā's marriage; fall of Khara and Triśiras; Rāma killing Rāvaṇa; banishment of Sītā; coronation of Rāma; Bharata accepting regency; fall of Cānūra; fall of Kaṃsa; Krishna fighting Vāṇa; and fight between Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Duḥśāsana.

The oldest known poet of the Rāma legend in Bengali is Kṛttivāsa Paṇḍita, a brahman of class ('Kulīna'). From the autobiographical account found in a very late MS, it appears that his great-great-grandfather Nārasiṃha came from East Bengal and settled at Phuliyā on the east bank of the Hooghly. Nārasiṃha was a courtier of a king Danuja. Kṛttivāsa was the eldest of six brothers and a half-sister. When Kṛttivāsa was born his grandfather Murāri was making preparations for a religious pilgrimage to South India. So his grandfather named him after Śiva, the predominant deity of the South. When the boy completed his eleventh year he was sent over to North Bengal where some of his kinsmen held important posts under the king. After finishing his education he sought an interview with the king who honoured him in the Indian way, i.e. by the offering of a garland, some sandal water and a silk scarf. He returned home joyfully and in good time recounted the Rāma story in Bengali verse. From the very meagre and extremely doubtful data culled from the autobiographical lines showing obviously late features some scholars are inclined to put Kṛttivāsa's date of birth in 1398. This deduction rests on two hypotheses: (*i*) Nārasiṃha's

patron king Danuja was the same person as 'Rāy Danuja' of the thirteenth century mentioned in Muslim history, and (*ii*) Kṛttivāsa visited the court of king Gaṇeś (Kans). Against these assumptions there are serious objections. King Gaṇeś was officially (i.e. on his coins) known as Danujamardana, and from various sources it is known that this Hindu king who occupied the throne of Bengal for some time used to help venerable and learned brahmans to settle on the banks of the Gaṅgā. A comparison of the genealogical table given in the autobiographical verses of Kṛttivāsa with that given by the famous Vaishnav philosopher Jīva Gosvāmin indicates that the patron of Nārasiṃha could be no other person than Gaṇeś-Danujamardana. This would mean that Kṛttivāsa belonged to the second half of the fifteenth century, and that he had come to the court of a Pathan sultan who may well have been Ruknuddīn Bārbak Shāh or Yūsuf Shāh or even Husain Shāh. Many of the king's courtiers mentioned in the autobiographical account of Kṛttivāsa happened to be the ministers and officials in the court of Husain Shāh; for instance Kedāra Rāya, Nārāyaṇa and Jagadānanda Rāya. One of the courtiers mentioned was Kedāra Khān. The title 'Khān' was bestowed on Hindu officials in Bengal only from the middle of the fifteenth century and not earlier.

So it appears that there is no way of definitely fixing the date of Kṛttivāsa. We must wait for new material or new evidence. In the meantime a most reasonable view would be to place the poet vaguely in the middle of the fifteenth century.

Kṛttivāsa may not have been the first writer of Rāmāyaṇa poetry in Bengali. But his has been undoubtedly the most acceptable. The penalty of its popularity has been heavy. As the days wore on the signature of the poet gathered more and more importance and the text of his poem less and less. The singers (*Gāyana*) of his poem consciously or unconsciously changed the language to suit their own dialects, and they did not miss any opportunity for what they consi-

dered as improvement on the text by the addition of various short tales and by the injection of popular likes and demands. In this manner much of the obviously late Vaishnav traits and episodes gradually crept into the poem so that by the end of the seventeenth century it retained nothing of the original except the name of the poet and a few sporadic couplets.

The manuscript copies of the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* bearing the name of Kṛttivāsa are numerous, but they mostly belong to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and none is older than the end of the seventeenth. The poem being considered a most suitable text for the civil servants of East India Company learning the language of the province was printed at the Mission Press at Serampore in 1802. The text of this *editio princeps* is really better than most of the older manuscripts and all of the later printed editions.

The story of Rāma has always exerted the greatest influence in the formation of the Indian mind and morals. In Bengal it has been achieved by the efforts of many poets (and singers) of whom Kṛttivāsa was the oldest and best.

THE earliest Bengali narrative poem that can be assigned to a definite date is also the oldest poem on the Krishna legend. It is *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* (Triumph of Lord Krishna) by Mālādhara Vasu who was conferred the sobriquet of 'Guṇarāja-Khān' by the sultan Ruknuddīn Bārbak Shāh. The poem is based mainly on the *Bhāgavata* and *Viṣṇu* Purāṇas. It took seven years (1473-80) to complete the poem. Mālādhara was a rich Kāyastha hailing from Kulīngrām in West Bengal. He was probably a revenue officer of the state and had been at the court of the sultan for some time. The poem is entirely narrative and there are no lyric effusions. But the devotional spirit and sincerity of the author raises the poem above mediocrity. The popularity of the poem seems to have been instantaneous. Chaitanya in his early

life had heard the poem sung frequently and so he was thoroughly acquainted with it. This acquaintance endeared the poet's sons to Chaitanya when they met the master for the first time at Puri. The poem was written for the masses but its tone being entirely devotional its popularity did not extend much beyond the devoted and the literate. So by the end of the seventeenth century it was partly superseded by poems that did not lack in popular appeal.

Mālādhara included the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in his *Śrīkṛṣnavijaya*. This part of the poem had a special vogue and it is known in MSS dating from the seventeenth century.

A narrative poem on Krishna was written by Yaśorāj-Khān, an officer of the sultan Husain Shah, whose real name seems to have been Dāmodar Sen. No manuscript copy of this *Kṛṣṇamaṅgal* poem is now available. Its existence is known from a quotation in a late seventeenth century work on Vaishnav rhetorics. The quotation comprises four narrative verse lines and a short lyric poem describing the eagerness of a girl of Vraja (probably Rādhā) for a sight of Krishna as he was returning home with his cattle at the close of the day. In the last couplet the poet has put his signature and has mentioned the name of his patron Husain Shāh the sultan. It may be taken as one of the earliest specimens of Middle Bengali lyric poetry and one of the two oldest specimens of Brajabuli songs (the other being the composition of a court poet of Dhanyamāṇikya of Tripurā).

THE most remarkable poem on the Krishna legend however is 'Baḍu' Caṇḍīdās's work which is known in a single and slightly mutilated manuscript copy edited by its discoverer Basantarañjan Rāy and published by Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad (1916). The manuscript does not show a title, but the editor supplied one, and it is known as *Srīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. The poem is remarkable in more than one respect. The manuscript shows a very archaic hand though

not uniformly ; the language presents an old form of Middle Bengali ; the structure of the poem is quite unlike the usual narrative type ; the tone of the poem is entirely secular, often verging on vulgarity. The more important episodes are not found in the known Purāṇa works. On the evidence of the old style of writing the manuscript is generally assigned to the fifteenth century. But it also shows a very late hand, sometimes in the same folio with the old hand. This late style of the script as well as the paper and the ink used points to a date which may be as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. Some scholars would put their faith on the language and date the poem in the early fifteenth century. But this deduction also is hardly justifiable. The language though fairly old definitely shows some late tendencies in sound change and in grammar. Besides, there are some naturalized Persian and Arabic words and even a hybrid word showing a Persian base and a Bengali affix. On the whole it may be agreed that the language of *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* roughly dates in the sixteenth century. But the work originally may be older.

The manuscript is mutilated at both ends and a few folios are missing in the middle. The only thing that can be gathered about the poet is his name Caṇḍīdās and his occupation 'Baḍu' (i.e. a brahman menial in a temple). We also know that he was a subordinate priest or a temple attendant ('gaṇa', 'gati') of the goddess Bāsalī (an older form of Kālī). Where this temple of Bāsalī was we do not know. Both the south-west (Chātnā in Bankura) and the north-west (Nānur in Birbhum) region claim him, and both claims have points in their favour. In form and technique *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* differs from all other narrative poems on the story of Krishna. The purely narrative element is absent. The story is carried entirely through songs by the three characters, and the songs are generally connected by single or double verses in Sanskrit, somewhat in the manner of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*. Such narrative or dramatic poems

comprising entirely of dialogues between two or three persons were known as 'Vāgveṇī' or 'Vāk-kelī' in high (i.e. Sanskrit and Prakrit) literature and as 'Jhumura' in low (i.e. vernacular) literature. Some of these connecting verses in Sanskrit are rather good, and it can be surmised that the poet possessed some skill in Sanskrit versification.

The tone of the poem is human and not devotional. In the treatment of the theme the traditional amorous motifs have been fully stressed as in the songs of Jayadeva. (As a matter of fact 'Baḍu' Caṇḍīdās has paraphrased two of Jayadeva's songs.) To our poet Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā were not merely figures taken out of myths or from the pages of the Purāṇas; nor were they simply symbols of devotional effusion. They are described as a pair of common human lovers rather crude and unsophisticated. Rādhā first appears as a very young girl hardly in her teens, wedded to a relative of Krishna, and the latter is a turbulent, precocious and churly cowherd boy.

Krishna one day noticed the budding youthful charms of Rādhā and at once fell in love. He secured the offices of Rādhā's great-aunt Baḍāi (old grandmother) for pleading his suit. Baḍāi approached Rādhā with the usual presents from Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā was very much offended and she turned out the old lady for the improper proposal. Baḍāi returned with more presents and put forward the additional argument that Krishna was an avatar of Vishnu and as such there would be no question of impropriety or sin in making love to him. This time also Baḍāi met with strong resistance. She took Rādhā's refusal as a personal offence and determined to break down her stiffness. On her advice Krishna now played the aggressive role of a road tax-collector and demanded a heavy sum from Rādhā when she and her friends were going to Mathurā to sell milk commodities. Naturally she could not pay and Krishna demanded love from her as an alternative. A heated argument followed. In the meantime Baḍāi came up and took the side of Krishna. Before the

joint front Rādhā broke down and tearfully she complained to her great-aunt but to no effect. But how-long could an inexperienced and immature girl resist the combined attacks of a lustful and aggressive young man and a wily old woman? Willy nilly she had to submit to Krishna, and the curtain drops on the biggest and the best dramatic episode of the 'tax collection' ('Dāna-Khaṇḍa').

Krishna did possess Rādhā's body but he could not awaken her love. She now took good care not to meet him alone. She and her friends gave up going by the main road to Mathurā and took a detour along the water front of the Yamunā. Krishna was baffled for a time. Then he again sought Baḍāi's advice and acting on it he turned out as a ferryman on the river. Rādhā got into his boat. When the boat was at some distance from the river bank Krishna foundered it deliberately. For fear of her life Rādhā clung to Krishna and the latter achieved his end. They swam back to the bank. Here ends the episodes of the 'ferry' ('Naukā-Khaṇḍa').

Rādhā's mother-in-law now had some reason to be suspicious and she did not allow her daughter-in-law to go out. Krishna was again obliged to seek Baḍāi's aid. Baḍāi saw Rādhā's mother-in-law and took her to task for upsetting the economy of the household by not letting her daughter-in-law go out to the market at Mathurā. Baḍāi assured her that Rādhā need not be now afraid of a hazardous ferry for it being then autumn one could easily take the tow path along the river. Rādhā was allowed to go out as before. This time Krishna approached her as a porter and was engaged by Rādhā to carry her commodities to Mathurā. He was promised satisfactory remuneration on way back home. Before he could press for his hire Krishna was made to hold a sunshade over Rādhā's head for the entire way back. These are the episodes concerning the 'load' and the 'umbrella' ('Bhār-Khaṇḍa' and 'Chatra-Khaṇḍa').

Krishna now began to pay some attention to the girl

friends of Rādhā, who are never mentioned individually. He had raised a nice woodland park and named it Vṛndāvana. He asked Baḍāi to invite Rādhā and her friends to come over and relax in his park. The girls came. Krishna was paying equal attention to each of them which Rādhā did not like, and when he made advances to her he was rebuffed. Krishna at once changed his tone and accused Rādhā for plucking flowers and injuring his precious plantation. For the first time Rādhā was put on the defensive. She changed her attitude and pleaded guilty of bad temper in this way:

> 'A girl is jealous by nature but a true lover does not take it seriously. By this your talk all my bitterness is removed. This is my constant request at your feet that you must not allow another girl to stand between us. The two hearts, yours and mine, the god of love has joined together. This is tested at Vṛndāvana. I will never more be contrary to your word. God arranged this love between you and me: we have the same heart beating in the same body. Such love does not tolerate a third party, and that is not my fault. Who can finish counting your excellences? They are struck firmly in my heart, one by one. Now do come and sit by me.' So sang Baḍu Caṇḍīdās.

The episode of the Vṛndāvana park ends in the lovers' happy union.

The next episode is the Puranic story of quelling the serpent Kāliya ('Kāliya-damana Khaṇḍa') infesting a pool in the Yamunā. Next comes the episode of the pool of the river ('Yamunā-Khaṇḍa'). Krishna treated the pool as his own reserve. He would allow only Rādhā and her friends to fetch water from it but on his own terms. After a good deal of parley Rādhā agreed. Kṛṣṇa enjoyed a good water sport with Rādhā and the other cowherd girls. This is the Puranic episode of 'robe-stealing' ('Vastraharaṇa-Khaṇḍa').

During the water sports Krishna had stolen Rādhā's

necklace. She complained to his mother Yaśodā. Krishna was severely rebuked. As a retaliation he directed the deadly dart of the god of love against Rādhā and she fell down in a faint. Baḍāi now charged him with woman-slaughter and had him kept confined. Krishna pleaded for immediate release as such a plight was too shameful for him, and Baḍāi was persuaded to set him free. Krishna was terrified and genuinely sorry for Rādhā. He bemoaned remorsefully over the prostrate form of the unfortunate girl. Ultimately Rādhā regained consciousness and the contrite lover made proper amends. Here ends the episode of the 'arrow' ('Bāṇa-Khaṇḍa').

After a time Rādhā became indifferent to Krishna. The latter tried in vain to draw her attention to himself in various ways whenever they met on the way to the river. At last he built a nice bamboo flute and began to play charming notes. Rādhā heard the notes and lost all control over herself; she was all agog to meet her lover. But Krishna took up an attitude of indifference and kept away from her. Rādhā entreated Baḍāi to bring Krishna to her. Baḍāi at first pleaded her old age and consequent inability to make uncertain journeys and then appealed to the girl's family prestige and good sense. But Rādhā was far gone, and she now cared little for anything else; her love was now all-engrossing and all-consuming. Baḍāi then contrived to have Krishna's flute stolen by Rādhā. Rādhā was now in a position to dictate her own terms to Krishna, who submitted with bad grace well concealed. This is the story of the 'flute' episode ('Vaṃśī-Khaṇḍa').

Krishna's love for Rādhā was fast ebbing out and Rādhā's love for Krishna was surging up. Krishna kept himself deliberately away from Rādhā as he was now thinking of leaving the place for good. Rādhā urged Baḍāi to do her best to bring back her truant lover. Baḍāi put in all kinds of excuses but finally she had to make her best attempts to find Krishna. After a time she was successful and the lovers

met once again at Vṛndāvan. Rādhā humbled herself before her lover and she pleaded her guilt in going against her lover's wishes at the early stage of their affair. Krishna was surly, complaining and vague. He said that he had reformed and had taken to Yoga practices. As an avatar he had now to do his work which would take him away to Mathurā and elsewhere. A love affair like this was not good for her reputation, and she must now try to forget him. Rādhā made a piteous appeal.

> 'If you have become a Yogi man discarding all and sundry I would become a Yogi woman and stay with you as an attendant.'

Finding it difficult to extricate himself from the tangles Krishna pretended to relent and made a show of making love to her. Presently the girl felt sleepy and stretched herself on the ground making a pillow of her lover's lap. Soon she was sleeping soundly and Krishna gingerly placed the girl's head on the ground and went away for good.

The quest for the vanished lover was again resumed by Baḍai but to no effect. Days and months passed. Rādhā pined for her runaway lover. Her pitiful appeal sped Baḍāi to Mathurā where she managed to meet Krishna. But he flatly refused to come back as he had not yet fully forgiven Rādhā for her past behaviour. Besides his immediate business was to bring about the downfall of Kaṃsa. Here the story comes to an abrupt end as the remaining folia of the manuscript are missing. This, the biggest episode, is named 'Rādhā-Viraha' ('suffering of Rādhā in separation from her lover'). The tone of the songs in this section is in assonance with the strain of the later lyrics on the topic. At least a few songs from this section retained their popularity to the eighteenth century.

Baḍu Caṇḍīdās's poem is the nearest approach to dramatic poetry in Middle Bengali literature. Only three characters are there and they are readymade, so to say. But

our poet moulded these characters handed down by tradition into creatures of flesh and blood. Krishna is crudely and rudely human; in spite of his occasional reminders to Rādhā and Baḍāi no one would take his divinity seriously. He is a full-blooded young man out to enjoy himself and fearing no consequences. In the delineation of Rādhā's character the poet has shown greater acumen; he has cleverly revealed the normal stages through which the mind of an inexperienced adolescent girl reaches maturity. Unlike the other two characters, Baḍāi is not a Puranic figure. She is based on a popular type well known in current literature,[1] the main purpose of which was to make the audience laugh, but our Baḍāi is never merely a droll figure nor always a bad old lady. Whatever she might have been when the story opened, we certainly feel that she meant well by both lovers and that she had a complete change of heart before the drop falls. She was genuinely worried for Rādhā when she was left in the lurch by her lover.

The style and diction of the poem is agreeable and the lyric effect is heightened by the dramatic movement. The songs are all written in Bengali and none in Brajabuli but the traces of the latter are however to be found in a few isolated forms.

CHAITANYA was partial to the songs on the Krishna topics, and he liked especially the songs of Jayadeva, Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdās, as all his old biographers testify. That was how the name of Caṇḍīdās received a special significance and came to be invariably associated with the names of the other two poets. There are a number of stories regarding Caṇḍīdās's love and companionship with a low-caste woman (named variously as Tārā, Rāmatārā or Rāmī). But its

[1] In Jyotirīśvara's *Varṇanaratnākara* there is a short description of a procuress (kuṭṭinī) which is a faithful portrait of 'Baḍu' Caṇḍīdās's Baḍāi. She also appears in a lyric song of Vidyāpati.

tradition however does not take us beyond the middle of the seventeenth century. The story of Caṇḍīdās's infatuation is as much trustworthy as the story of Vidyāpati's love affair with the queen Lachimā. The story probably grew on the fact that Caṇḍīdās was a worshipper of the Tantric goddess Bāsuli. The attendant *yoginīs* of Bāsulī were known as *Nityā* (Netā in vernacular). A Netā was also the washerwoman of the gods as we have seen in the story of Behulā. Thus a washerwoman was finally evolved as Caṇḍīdās's companion in faith and love, as the opening line of a very late poem written by a Vaishnav Tantrist indicates:

> By the command of Bāsulī Nityā proceeded to reveal the secret of the doctrine ('Sahaja') to him (i.e. Caṇḍīdās).

When Caṇḍīdās's reputation became well established his name began, as days went on, to pool in poems and songs of forgotten and half-forgotten as well as of well-known poets in the same manner as the Brajabuli songs were collected in the name of Vidyāpati. The eighteenth and nineteenth century anthologists collected a large number of songs bearing the signature ('Bhaṇitā') of Caṇḍīdās. None of these with the exception of a few, can be assigned to Baḍu Caṇḍīdās, and the best songs in the older manuscripts and texts bear the names of some of the best known Vaishnav poets of the sixteenth century. The remainder is large but they generally do not possess much literary value. There have been other poets by the name of Caṇḍīdās or subscribing as such. But with the exception of a very inferior writer who wrote much, their existence cannot be established beyond doubt. One of these hypothetical Caṇḍīdāses is referred to as 'Dvija' Caṇḍīdās. A very limited number of songs, however, may be ascribed to the old poet with tolerable assurance. There are also quite a number of mystic songs carrying the signature of Caṇḍīdās. It is not unlikely that some of these were written by him as we know from *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* that the path of

Yoga was not unknown to him. But the songs as we find them are saturated with the late Vaishnav doctrines and sprinkled with foreign words and late phrases. We also know that some of the leading Vaishnav poets of the sixteenth century wrote a few such mystic lyrics (known among Vaishnavs as 'Rāgātmika Padāvalī' (songs pertaining to devotional love).

THE oldest known as well as the completest homogeneous narrative poem on a non-Purāṇic theme is *Manasāvijaya* by Vipradās, a brahman belonging to a place not very distant from the west bank of the Hooghly. In the opening part of the poem Vipradās gives a meagre account of himself and his family. Then he proceeds to the occasion and date (1495) of his writing the poem:

> On the tenth night of the bright fortnight in the month of Vaiśākha the goddess came and sat by my pillow and gave me direction. She commanded me to write a Pāñcālī poem on her. That is my wherewithal; I know nothing much. I proffer my apologies to poets, to masters and to the knowledgeable folk, and I write the song on the goddess in accordance with the ordinance (of her worship). In the Śaka year enumerated by the seas (7), the moon (1), the Vedas (4) and the earth (1)[2] when King Husain Shāh is the lord of Gauḍ.

The manuscript copies of the text are rather late, and the poem being popular some interpolations have crept in. But they are of minor nature and are easily detectable. The story of the goddess Manasā is here presented to us in a form that is really old and not appearing in other and later works of the *genre*. The style is simple and direct, and the story interest never flags.

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[2] Reading the digits from the right to the left the line gives the Śaka year 1417=A.D. 1495-96.

Another poem on the same goddess is generally believed to have been written in the last decade of the fifteenth century. It is Vijay Gupta's *Manasāmaṅgal*. But there is no manuscript material available in support of the presumed date 1416 Śaka (A.D. 1494). The text is published in several editions, each showing successive emendations by the editors. It bears the signatures of many poets and singers. The language of course is very modern. But some of the episodes point to an old source. The poet belonged to the lower East Bengal (Barisal).

SINCE at least the days of the last Pāla kings recital of the *Mahābhārata* had been a custom at the courts of kings and feudal chiefs. After the darkness of centuries we catch a glimpse of the continuation of this custom in the shadow court of a provincial satrap under Husain Shāh. In the meantime Kāyasthas, and not brahmans specifically as in the recital of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, had become almost professional readers of the *Mahābhārata*. In Middle Bengali literature the authors of the narrative poems based on the *Māhābhārata* were almost exclusively Kāyastha by caste. It may be remembered in this connexion that Mālādhara Vasu the author of *Śrīkṛṣṇavijay* was a Kāyastha.

The oldest known poet to write a Bengali *Mahābhārata* was Parameśvar Dās entitled 'Kavīndra' (Master Poet). He was the court poet of Parāgal Khān, a general ('laskar') of Husain Shāh and governor of Chittagong. At the request of his patron who was never tired of listening to the story of the conflict between the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas the poet rendered the epic story in Bengali verse. The poem, known in manuscripts going back to the middle of the seventeenth century, treated the theme briefly. The work was evidently popular as manuscripts have been recovered from all parts of the country.

Parāgal's son Nasrat Khān, known from his father's life-

time as the 'Junior Khān' ('Chuṭi Khān'), shared his father's partiality for the epic story. Nasrat too was an army commander. His success in the expedition to Tipperah won high favour from Husain Shāh. Not satisfied with the short version of the Aśvamedha section in Parameśvar's poem he had the more varied version as occurring in *Jaiminīya-Saṃhitā* rendered into Bengali verse by his own court poet Śrīkara Nandī. So says the poet in the beginning of his tale:

> In the court attended largely by pundits the high-souled Khān was one day seated surrounded by his friends. He was listening to the tale of *Mahābhārata*, the stories of the Puraṇa text compiled by the great sage Jaimini. The episode of the Horse Sacrifice pleased him; and the Khān addressed the assembly: 'We have heard the *Mahābhārata* story narrated by Vyāsa; better still is the story told by the sage Jaimini. The Sanskrit text of the epic is not understood by all. So listen, you poets, to this my request. By being narrated in the local speech let the story proclaim my name throughout the land.' Placing on head this his request as a chaplet Śrīkara Nandī speaks out, composing this Pañcālī poem.

It appears that both Parāgal and his son Nasrat could follow a recital of the Sanskrit text of *Mahābhārata*.

7

CHAITANYA AND HIS MOVEMENT

NORTHERN INDIA in the fifteenth century experienced a vital outburst of the devotional discipline known as the *Bhakti* movement. Its earlier sources were three-fold:

(*i*) Vasudeva-Krishna worship dating from the pre-Christian centuries; (*ii*) Gopa-Krishna worship based on the Vedic tradition of Vishnu the lord of the spring of honey and cattle around; and (*iii*) Lokanātha worship of Bengal Buddhism which laid particular emphasis on all-round non-violence and compassion for living beings and on the attitude of perfect surrender to divine dispensation. These three streams of the Bhakti discipline came together in the dark centuries and resulted in an overflow subsequently. Sūfi mysticism also contributed materially to its development.

There were two distinct currents in the spread of devotionalism in the fifteenth century, the fountain-heads of which were the two masters Rāmānanda Swāmī and Mādhavendra Pūrī. Rāmānanda's activities centred in Banaras. His doctrine was based on *Advaita* (Non-duality between the Creator and the created) philosophy, and he did not fully approve of the orthodox system of caste that admitted only the brahmans to the shastric path of devotional practice and spiritual emancipation. Rāmānanda's disciples included men from the lower castes and outcastes. 'Rāma' was the name that he and his followers generally employed for the attributeless godhead (*nirguṇa brahman*).

It was perhaps the Sūfis of Sindh and the Panjab (including Delhi) who made the vernacular the vehicle of the poetic outburst of their spiritual yearnings. Rāmānanda and his disciples followed them. The master was a good Sanskrit scholar no doubt, but his appeal was to the masses, and so he could not ignore the vernacular speech in his lyric compositions meant for them. Kabir, the best of his

disciples, was probably born a Muslim and he belonged to the weaver class. In some of the songs and verses of Kabir the spirit of Bhakti has been often served in the old cup of Yoga mysticism.

The eastern school of devotional mysticism worshipped Child-Krishna (*Bāla-Gopāla*). So far as we know it was initiated by Mādhavendra Pūrī, who though obviously belonging to an *Advaita* sect of *sannyasins*, worshipped with ardent devotion an image of Child-Krishna which he found in Mathurā. It appears that Mādhavendra was the founder of the neo-Vaishnav centre at Mathurā which was shifted to Brindavan by Sanātana and Rūpa at the instance of Chaitanya who located some of the holy sites relating to the Vraja legend. There were also other reasons for this shift. One of Mādhavendra's most devoted disciples was Īśvara Pūrī, a native of Kumārahaṭṭa (about 25 miles north of Calcutta) on the Gaṅgā, who was the guru of Chaitanya, the guru who turned a high-spirited, full-blooded young pundit into the passionate *bhakta* whose devotional appeal became irresistible. The two most influential followers of Chaitanya were Advaita and Nityānanda, both years senior to him. They had come in close contact with Mādhavendra who periodically made long treks from Mathurā to South India and back *via* Bengal and Orissa and brought sandal-wood for the worship of his image of Krishna. In this way he joined together the streams of Bhakti from the South and the North. One is tempted to surmise that in course of such a journey Mādhavendra met Mālādhara Vasu the author of the first Bengali adaptation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

Mādhavendra did not write books, only a few verses in Sanskrit. One of his verses which he is supposed to have uttered on his death-bed is translated below. It reveals a very passionate devotee:

> My master, compassionate to the miserable, Lord of Mathurā, when would you have a look at me? My

darling, not meeting you, my heart is aching and sinking. What shall I do now?

This (Bengal) Vaishnavism drew for its inspiration on the text of the *Bhāgavata* which was probably of South Indian origin. It seems to have been brought to Bengal by Karṇāṭa brahmans from Mithila who held high office at the court of the sultan. Husain Shāh's trusted officers Sanātan and Rūp were Karṇāṭa brahmans, and we know that before they met Chaitanya they had been already initiated in *Bhāgavata* Vaishnavism. By the end of the fifteenth century the study of the *Bhāgavata* by devotional Vaishnavs had come to Sāntipur and Navadvīp (Nadia) which had now become the centres of brahmanical lore and Sanskrit learning. Only very ambitious scholars with court connections would go to Gauḍ and risk the contamination of the court atmosphere and the odium of foreign contact.

CHAITANYA (or Viśvambhara as his real name was before his renunciation of home-life) was born at Navadvīp in 1486. He was the younger of two brothers. His father Jagannāth Miśra originally belonged to North-east Bengal (Sylhet). His mother Śacī was a disciple of Advaita Ācārya who was a very influential and very learned pundit also hailing from Sylhet. Chaitanya's elder brother Viśvarūp was about ten years older, and was a student of Advaita. Learning that his father was arranging marriage for him, Viśvarūp who had imbibed spiritual ideas and did not like to enter domestic life, left home and became a sannyāsin. This was a tremendous blow to his parents who had placed high hopes on their elder son. They would not at first send their younger child to school as they were now afraid that Sanskrit learning might turn his head also. But the father had to relent at the insistence of Chaitanya. The schooling however did not change his nature. Chaitanya grew up a little tyrant

at home and outside, but none could help liking the fair-complexioned good-looking child and his captivating manners. The father did not long survive the departure of his elder son, and his death sobered Chaitanya. He wholeheartedly pursued the path of knowledge. In a short time Chaitanya distinguished himself as a grammarian and rhetorician.

At the age of sixteen Chaitanya was married to Lakṣmīpriyā, a meek and docile girl of his own choice, and he started his own school. Then he made a journey to East Bengal, visiting his ancestral home and meeting the rich disciples of his ancestors. He returned home to find that his child wife had died. After some time Chaitanya was persuaded to marry again. This second wife, Viṣṇupriyā, belonged to a rich and influential family of Navadvīp. Shortly after the marriage he went to Gaya to perform the last rites of his father. There he met Īśvara Pūrī a disciple of Mādhavendra Pūrī and attracted by the latter's spirituality he took initiation from him. This was the most significant event in Chaitanya's life. The brahman boy in his teens, well-posted in life, an acknowledged leader of the young scholars of Navadvīp, liked by all for his distinguished looks and high-spirited intelligence, now in a moment became an emotional mystic. Chaitanya wanted to go straight to Mathura, the land most sacred to Vaishnavs. The ministration of his companions and attendants brought him back home safely. This change of attitude of Nimāi Paṇḍit, as he was then popularly known, pleased those of his neighbours and well-wishers who were of the Vaishnav faith or inclination and who were always attracted by the boy in spite of his whimsical ways.

Chaitanya was automatically accepted as the leader of this small circle formed by what may be called the 'underground' Vaishnavs. Among these first followers of Chaitanya were many of his students whom he was now unable to teach for exuberence of devotional feeling. Chaitanya and his companions in faith muttered the various names of Krishna-

Vishnu as the only ritual, which they chanted, sang and danced together. This was the beginning of 'Saṃkīrttan' (singing together the name of God) introduced by Chaitanya as the ritual of public worship. It was also a vicarious beginning of the assertion of the public right of freedom for divine worship. The novelty of Saṃkīrttan caught public fancy. Finding a heterogeneous crowd too much of a disturbance Chaitanya and his followers used to meet at night in the house of Śrīvās Paṇḍit, Chaitanya's neighbour and family friend, and chant the name and glory of God. The public Kīrttan in daytime was entrusted to Nityānanda and Haridās. Friendly people took heart and began to whisper that Chaitanya was in reality the brahman predicted to occupy the throne of Gauḍ. Men who did not like Chaitanya made much of this rumour and complained to the Kazi (Muslim magistrate) of the locality. As a result Saṃkīrttan in public was at once forbidden.

But Chaitanya would not submit to the wrongful order of prohibition. Challenging the order he led a Saṃkīrttan party patrolling through the streets of Navadvīp. This party, swelling to a huge crowd, moved about the whole town loudly singing the name of God and finally came to the residence of the Kazi. The huge crowd and its truculent spirit terrorized the Kazi and he took refuge behind bolted doors. Chaitanya called him to come out without fear. The Kazi came out in a chastened mood, humbly begged pardon for his injudicious order and forthwith withdrew it. This incident established Chaitanya as the leading figure of Navadvīp. It was perhaps the first act of civil disobedience in the history of India.

The divine spark in Chaitanya was gradually flaring into a flame the like of which had never been before. It is therefore no wonder that his followers and admirers believed him to be an avatar. But Chaitanya did not care to be an avatar. His mission was to make even the lowliest God-minded ; he wanted the people to be free of all social barriers

and political bondage and racial and doctrinal inhibitions. To him there was no difference between a brahman priest and a low-caste sweeper as both lived in God and God lived in both. According to him the best and easiest way to kindle the latent spark of the Divine in man is to become God-minded by taking the name of God in a spirit of humility, devotion and selflessness.

Advaita Ācārya, the brain behind Chaitanya, and Haridās, a Sūfi convert to the Vaishnav faith and a very remarkable personality, were of the greatest service to Chaitanya for the propagation of his faith before Nityānanda, whose is the most honoured name after Chaitanya, had joined them. Navadvīp was now in a tumult of devotional upheaval. After the quelling of the Kazi the most spectacular triumph of Chaitanya was the conversion of the brahman brothers Jagāi and Mādhāi who were notoriously bad characters and who had preferred to live a life of profligacy and taken to the Muslim way.

In his twenty-fourth year (1509) Chaitanya renounced home-life and became a *sannyāsin.* Now he made his residence at Puri, which was the nearest religious and pilgrim centre where a Vaishnav mendicant could live in peace, inasmuch as Orissa had not yet lost her independence to the Muslim power. Six years were spent in pilgrimages to Northern, Western and Southern India.

His first attempt to visit Mathurā had to be terminated at Rāmakeli near Gauḍ as a very huge crowd had followed him there from Bengal. Here he met for the first time the brothers Sanātan and Rūp. To avoid a crowd following him, Chaitanya on his next visit went to Banaras, Prayag and Mathura through the wild regions of Mayurbhanj and Jharkhand. He discovered some holy spots in Brindaban and thereby laid there the foundation of the Bengal school of Vaishnav activity. Before him Mādhavendra Pūrī had started the worship of Krishna in Mathurā. On the return journey he met Rūp at Prayag and Sanātan at Banaras. The

two brothers had then given up the service of the sultan and adopted the life of the Vaishnav mendicants. Chaitanya directed the brothers to go to Brindaban and settle there as teachers of the faith. Before he undertook this pilgrimage he had completed his tour throughout South India, the Deccan and Gujarat. In course of that tour he had met Rāmānanda Rāy the viceroy of the Oriya king in Ganjam and a devout, mystic Vaishnav at heart.

For the last eighteen years of his life (1515-33) Chaitanya did not leave Puri. He would come every day to the temple, take his stand by the Garuḍa pillar with his eyes fixed on the deity for hours and shedding streaming tears. Then he would return home and beguile the long hours of disconsolate separation from his Beloved by listening to the *Bhāgavata* read by Gadādhar Paṇḍit, a friend of his childhood days, and the songs of Jayadeva and other poets on his beloved Krishna sung by Dāmodar Svarūp. The nights he passed in sorrowful ecstasy. Every year, on the occasion of the Car festival ('Rathayātrā') his old friends, followers and devotees from the farthest corners of Bengal would assemble at Puri and pass four months joyfully in his company. This annual pilgrimage brought about a closer contact between Bengal and Orissa.

Chaitanya had already become a divinity, and many regarded him as an avatar. Some of his followers including Advaita started the worship of Gaurāṅga (one of the names by which Chaitanya was known in his home-life; literally 'the fair-complexioned') and his wooden image was established for perpetual worship at several places in Bengal. During one of the annual pilgrimages at Puri, Advaita publicly proclaimed Chaitanya as the latest and greatest avatar and started the vogue of Kīrttan (i.e. ceremonial singing) of his name. Chaitanya did not like this at all but the thing was now out of anybody's control inasmuch as the people's enthusiasm was boundless. Advaita composed this couplet which is the first Kīrttan verse on Chaitanya.

> O Śrī-Chaitanya, you are Nārāyaṇa, the sea of compassion, the friend of humble and of the sufferer. Do take pity on me.

Chaitanya did not write much. The poem in eight stanzas in Sanskrit, known among the Vaishnavs as *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (the lesson in eight verses) is practically his only writing that we possess and it reveals the clearest enunciation of his faith. The poem, translated below, tersely but feelingly expresses the magnificence of Chaitanya's faith of devotion and love.

> By polishing bright the mirror of the heart, by quenching the conflagration of existence, by scattering the moonbeams that help the lily of salvation to blossom, by awakening the life of the bride of knowledge, by causing the sea of bliss dispensing the drink of pure nectar at every step, and by cleansing as in a bath the entire soul, the chant of the name of Krishna is ever triumphant. 1

> He has given Himself innumerable names, and in each of them He has vested all His power. He has assigned no fixed time for contemplating Him by taking His names. Such is Thy compassion, my God! All the same I am so luckless that I feel no joy in taking Thy name. 2

> Feeling as lowly as a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, forgetful of his own importance but acknowledging the same in others, a man should chant the name of God. 3

> Neither riches nor mastery over men, neither a lovely wife nor poetic gift do I desire, O lord of the universe. (My only desire is that) in my future births may there be pure devotion to Thee, my God. 4

O son of Nanda, I am Thy slave tossing helplessly in the boiling sea of existence. Do Thou mercifully take me as a speck of dust of Thy feet. 5

My eyes would be shedding streams of tears, my voice would be choked with emotion, my limbs would be bristling in ecstatic joy: when could this happen (to me) while taking Thy name? 6

A moment seems as long as an aeon ; my eyes resemble rain-clouds. The whole world appears empty, as I am separated from my God. 7

He may hold me in close embrace or He may trample me under His feet. He may withdraw Himself from me and make me suffer agonies. The fickle Lover may do as He likes, but He alone is the possessor of my heart. 8

After Chaitanya the acknowledged leaders of the Vaishnav faith in Bengal were Advaita and Nityānanda. The latter was from his early youth a god-given and restless spirit. In his teens he had left home in the company of a yogi mendicant and had travelled extensively over Northern India, in course of which he had met Mādhavendra Pūrī and had imbibed the spirit of the master's fervent faith. His course of itineracy terminated at Navadvīp where he now met Chaitanya and the latter did much to curb his exuberance but never fully succeeded. Chaitanya accepted Nityānanda as his elder brother come back home, and it easily made the newcomer the second in command. Advaita was already fifty when Chaitanya was born, and he was not of a volatile or highly emotional temperament as Nityānanda was. Advaita could never be entirely unconventional and go about anywhere and everywhere shouting the name of Hari, which came naturally to Nityānanda. This endeared the latter to the

masses who acclaimed him as Chaitanya's lieutenant when the master was no longer with them. Advaita Ācārya had influential friends and disciples, but the followers of Nityānanda were much more numerous and they came from every part of Bengal. After the death of Nityānanda and Advaita the leadership passed into the hands of Jāhnavā Devi and Sītā Devi. The former was the junior wife of Nityānanda and and the latter of Advaita. Their sons and grandsons started the two main lines of Vaishnav gurus in Bengal distinguished by the surname of Gosvāmī. Advaita and Nityānanda did their best to propagate the worship of Chaitanya in its simple and pure form. Nityānanda's followers took one step further: they advocated the joint worship of Chaitanya and Nityānanda. To counteract this joint worship the Gosvāmins of Brindavan headed by Sanātan, Rūp and Jīv started the vogue of the joint worship of Krishna and Rādhā. Before that only the image of Krishna was worshipped. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship in Bengal (as distinct from the Chaitanya-Nityānanda worship which was established fully) was sponsored mainly by the wives and successors of Advaita and Nityānanda.

Sanātan and Rūp who established the centre of Vaishnav learning in Brindaban after the death of Chaitanya took for themselves a firm stand on the *Bhāgavata*. They did not encourage the cult of Chaitanya and Nityānanda, and wrote volumes of poetry, drama, rhetoric and philosophy as well as commentaries in support of the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This was not because they rejected Chaitanya worship but because they wanted to stop the degeneration of Chaitanya's faith into a mere cult of avatar worship. The Gosvāmins of Brindavan not only believed in the avatarhood of Chaitanya but went further. They held the view that Chaitanya was the joint avatar of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and therefore the completest avatar. But they also held that Chaitanya was an avatar who had refused to be worshipped as such and wanted to be taken as an ordinary

man. According to them Chaitanya's apparent mission was to show the easy path of salvation to men of this dark age but his real purpose was to experience the bitter-sweet experience of the divine love by divinity itself. This interpretation of Chaitanya's life and activity was first promulgated by Svarūp Dāmodar and developed as a doctrine by Sanātan and Rūp and by their colleagues and followers at Brindavan, who wrote the Sanskrit texts and commentaries on the faith of Chaitanya as they understood it.

The influence of Chaitanya's personality and faith had reached the fringes of Assam. Śaṅkar-Dev (d. 1568) who was mainly responsible for the propagation of the *Bhāgavata* Vaishnavism in Kāmarūp and Coochbehar had possibly met Chaitanya at Puri and received inspiration from him. Like Chaitanya, Śaṅkar-Dev was a worshipper of Child Krishna; the joint worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was not known to him. This form of worship reached Assam only towards the end of the sixteenth century. Its introduction brought in a schism in the Vaishnav faith in that country. The followers of Śaṅkar-Dev (who was a Kāyastha and therefore opposed by the orthodox brahman community) formed the 'Mahāpuruṣīyā' sect, and the followers of Dāmodar-Dev (who admitted Chaitanya as the completest avatar representing Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā together) were known as the 'Dāmodarīyā' sect. The inspiration of the latter sect undoubtedly emanated from Brindavan, and from Assam and Navadvīp it went over to Manipur. In Orissa Bengal Vaishnavism was accepted in general, but there was a setback after the death of the leading followers of Chaitanya, and especially after the fall of the kingdom.

The Brindavan school of Vaishnavism (presided over by six masters, four hailing from Bengal, one each from Bihar and South India) offered shelter to the homeless Vaishnavs from all provinces of India. Some time after the death of Nityānanda and Advaita the Vaishnav leaders in Bengal

began to take guidance from Brindavan, and Bengal Vaishnavism slowly but surely took up the colouring of a kind of orthodoxy. Brindavan became the spiritual as well as material goal of all Vaishnav devotees and as a consequence the importance of the local centres (such as Navadvīp, Sāntipur, Khardah and a few others) gradually diminished.

8

THE NEW URGE IN LITERATURE

CHAITANYA brought together the people of Bengal and Orissa and also a large body of men from other parts of India who came in personal contact with him, on a common platform of emancipated religious thought and spiritual emotion, which gave a tremendous impetus to intellectual activity and created a new interest in life and a new literary and artistic urge. The common platform was open to all, high and low, rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim. Chaitanya did not try openly to do away with the caste system, but he attempted to undo its evil effects indirectly. He respected the casteism of the priesthood but did not himself hesitate to bury with his own hand the dead body of Haridās, a Muslim by birth, and observe his death ceremony ('urs'). This was the origin of the custom of the death ceremony 'Mahotsav' and its anniversary regularly observed even now by the orthodox Vaishnavs. Nityānanda also did not encourage orthodoxy. He treated all men as equal. Bengal Vaishnavism did away with casteism to this extent that some of the non-brahman followers of Chaitanya became acknowledged gurus who had brahmans too among their disciples. But this tendency of liberalism was checked by the imposition of the rigid rules of conduct of the Brindavan school.

As an advance towards social freedom this was a gain, no doubt, but not much. The psychological effect, however, was tremendous, inasmuch as it brought about an atmosphere of relief and thankfulness; and thoughtful men found an outlet for their emotional upsurge—which invariably flowed into literature and music. Chaitanya was a lover of the songs of Jayadeva, Vidyāpati, Caṇḍīdās and other poets, and he imparted his love to some of his followers. This was the beginning of the lyric impulse that brought vitality into literature and music.

Chaitanya was so magnetic and overwhelming a persona-

lity and his influence was so pervasive that he was even during his lifetime looked upon as an incarnation of God. As a sequence the spotlight of popular reverence and faith shifted from the traditional deities to a contemporary human being. The faithful believed that in Chaitanya God had appeared on the earth as a man. This faith found enthusiastic expression in works glorifying the life of the man who was God.

Except for some stray couplets and sporadic songs the first attempts in this direction were in Sanskrit. The first biography of Chaitanya is by Murāri Gupta, one of the master's oldest followers. It is in the form of a narrative poem in Sanskrit and has been known as Murāri Gupta's Journal ('Kaḍacā'). For the early life of Chaitanya it supplied the materials to all the later biographers. The next work was a Sanskrit drama written by a brahman devotee from East or North-east Bengal. The author came to Puri to meet Chaitanya and to have his work accepted by the master and his followers. He received no encouragement and consequently it perished leaving for us the solitary opening verse quoted in a later work. The next important work in Sanskrit is a very short poem written by Raghunāth Dās, sole heir to a large estate who had renounced home-life and lived as a mendicant at the feet of Chaitanya at Puri. Raghunāth was an eyewitness to the activities of the master during the last ten or twelve years of his life. His poem therefore has preserved for us the most authentic record of the later life of Chaitanya. Paramānanda Sen, entitled 'Kavi-karṇapūr' (Ear Ornament of Poets), who was the youngest son of a follower of Chaitanya, wrote on the life of the master a drama (*Caitanyacandrodaya*) and an epic poem (*Caitanyacaritāmṛta*) completed in 1538 and 1542 respectively. The poet's third attempt on the subject is a list of the names of the more important followers of Chaitanya and of their disciples. This work was written in 1545.

Caitanyamaṅgal, better known as *Caitanya-Bhāgavat,*

by Bṛndāvandās is the first biography of Chaitanya written in Bengali. It is a long narrative poem divided into three sections ('Khaṇḍa') and fifty-two chapters ('Adhyāya'). The name *Caitanyamaṅgal* suggests that it was meant to be chanted and sung like the traditional narrative poems on the mythological topics. Bṛndāvandās's poem was a success from the very beginning, and its popularity has been maintained. The other title (*Caitanya-Bhāgavat*) by which the poem is generally known indicates that it is connected with Chaitanya worship in the same way as the *Bhāgavata* is associated with Krishna worship. Bṛndāvandās was a grand-nephew of Śrīvās Paṇḍit, Chaitanya's elderly neighbour and family friend and one of the two earliest followers. Young Bṛndāvan became a disciple of Nityānanda at whose instance the poem was written. The material was obtained from Nityānanda, Advaita and other close followers of the master. The documentary value of the poem is undeniable if we overlook the bias of the poet and his impatient effusions. The date of composition is not known. There is no reference to the end of Chaitanya's life, neither of Nityānanda and Advaita both of whom survived Chaitanya. It can be safely assumed that the work was begun when Chaitanya was living and was completed soon after the death of the master and before the birth of Nityānanda's son. This would mean that Bṛndāvan's poem was completed some time about 1540.

Bṛndāvandās was indeed a poet and could not have avoided lyrical touches in his narration. His sincere devotion and enthusiastic admiration have often imparted a glow to his diction which rescues his expression of sectarian dogma from triviality. Incidentally the poem contains invaluable details throwing a great deal of light on the social conditions of West Bengal in the late fifteenth century, just before Chaitanya was born.

Bṛndāvandās succeeded in presenting a picture of Chaitanya that is entirely human. This is in very refreshing contrast with the colourless and stereotyped artificiality of

the characters drawn from mythology and folk-lore and delineated in contemporary 'Maṅgala' poetry.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj's *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* (Nectar of the Activities of Chaitanya) is the next biographical work of importance. In one respect at least it is more important than any other work on Chaitanya and his faith: it incorporates the rhetorico-philosophical theories on Chaitanya and Vaishnavism propounded by Dāmodar Svarūp and accepted by Sanātan, Rūp and other Vaishnav leaders at Brindavan. Kṛṣṇadās had left home at a comparatively early age and gone to live at Brindavan as a Vaishnav recluse, probably in temple service of the deity Madana-Gopāla established by Sanātan. During the last days of Rūp and of Raghunāth Dās he served as their personal attendant. Like them Kṛṣṇadās did not accept Chaitanya as an avatar alone of Vishnu as Bṛndāvandās had done. Unlike his predecessor Kṛṣṇadās was a good Sanskrit scholar and as seen above, he had come in close contact with Sanātan, Rūp, Raghunāth and other old Vaishnav leaders at Brindavan, but like Bṛndāvandās he was a follower of Nityānanda. As a veteran of the Brindavan school Kṛṣṇadās accepted Chaitanya as the avatar of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the same person and therefore the fullest of the avatars. His treatment of the life of the master was from this viewpoint. As a biography Kṛṣṇadās's poem is of a very high standard as he has never failed to quote authority for his statements. It is, however, not merely a biography. *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* is a compendium of the Vaishnav faith in both its mystic and its philosophical aspects. The date of composition is not known. Some manuscripts give it as 1616. But there are strong reasons against accepting so late a date. It appears that Raghunāth Dās was living when Kṛṣṇadās completed the poem. The probable date was some time between 1575 and 1595.

Kṛṣṇadās was a profound scholar and his Sanskrit works include an elaborate 'epic' poem on the story of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa entitled *Govindalīlāmṛta* (Nectar of the Sports of

Govinda). *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* his masterpiece, was produced when he was a very old man. As has been said this biography of Chaitanya in Bengali is a very remarkable work ; it is the most scholarly book that has yet been written in Bengali on the subject, but the proper Vaishnav spirit of humility is never absent. Bṛndāvandās had given full account of the early life of Chaitanya. Kṛṣṇadās has given only a mere outline of it so that his predecessor's excellent work might not be superceded. On the other hand, he treated the last eighteen years of Chaitanya's life in detail as it had not been done by any of his predecessors. As a biography of Chaitanya, *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* is also unique in respect of accounts of the master's extensive travels. Kṛṣṇadās's command over the language was much in advance of his time. He wrote verses with as much facility and force as prose. Thus as a biography and as a work of thought Kṛṣṇnadās's Life of Chaitanya is a landmark in New Indian literature.

Locandās, one of the best known lyric poets of the early sixteenth century, also wrote a biography of Chaintanya (*Caitanyamaṅgal*) based largely on the Sanskrit poem of Murāri Gupta. Locan's poem opens in the typical manner of a *Purāṇa* but otherwise the traditional narrative frame is preserved. It is full of lyrical flourishes and for this reason it maintained its popularity among the masses longer than any other biographical poem on Chaitanya.

Some very fine Vaishnav lyrics were produced by Locan. He introduced the vogue of the 'Dhāmāli' poems or songs. Such songs, written in popular tripping metre and in inelegant diction and feminine taste came originally from the domain of women's recitals. The topic of these songs was almost exclusively the love affair of Krishna and the cowherd maidens. Locan adopted the 'Dhāmāli' style also for some of his songs on Chaitanya. It may be remembered here that the poet's guru Narahari Dās Sarkār was one of the pioneers of Chaitanya worship. Locan wrote also some mystic songs.

The Bengali original of the following mystic song is in the 'Dhāmāli' style:

> In the land of the Vraja and in the city of Beauty the river of Bliss flows by. Along the bank a ripple came and touched the person of Gorā.[1] It swelled into a billow of love that, by day and night, surged up and down the person of Gaur.[1] Men gave up their occupation and religious meditation and the religious mendicants threw away asceticism. In their heart of hearts men are putting all blame on Beauty, but that Beauty is but a spring of honey, fathomless. Contemplation of this beauty is as of a necklace of gold. It dispells the darkness of the mind. The stream of Beauty strangely enough runs through the dark universe. The universe floats in the sea of Beauty and Bliss and so also the fourteen worlds. One worships as one eats; one is overwhelmed when one looks on; one knows not when one speaks. Whoever, volunteering a difficult service kills his own self, says Locan, verily obtains Gaur effortlessly.

Of the biographies of Chaitanya written in the sixteenth century two others are worth mention. One is by Cuḍāmaṇi-dās, a disciple of a follower of Nityānanda. HIs book is entitled *Gaurāṅgavijay*. It contains some additional and valuable information about the early life of Chaitanya and Nityānanda. The narration is good. The poem must have been written before 1560.

The other is *Caitanyamaṅgal* by Jayānanda. It is a poem of the popular narrative type. Jayānanda belonged to South-west Bengal and his poem was known almost exclusively in that region. Jayānanda's father was a disciple of Gadādhar Pandit, one of the closest followers of Chaitanya. Jayānanda therefore was a younger contemporary of Cuḍāmaṇidās. In the introductory portion of his poem Jayānanda

[1] Literally a fair-complexioned man, i.e. Gaurāṅga (Chaitanya).

mentions by name some of his predecessors in the field, of whom only Bṛndāvandās's work is known to us. Jayānanda's *Caitanyamaṅgal* is the only work where the incident of Chaitanya's death is mentioned. There is some additional information about the master and his ancestors, which may not be fully authentic. By the middle of the sixteenth century quite a mass of legends had grown up round the name of Chaitanya, and long before the close of the century he had been set up in the full glory of a regular mythological deity. Jayānanda's appeal was not to the initiated and devout Vaishnav but to the common people who were interested in the life story of the master rather than in theological explanations. This is why Jayānanda had incorporated in his biography of Chaitanya long Puranic tales such as the story of Dhruva, Jaḍa-Bharata and Indradyumna. Jayānanda's poem is not suffused with inspiration as Bṛndāvandās's is but it bears ample evidence of his devotion and fervour. Passages marked with a felicity of expression emanating from a deep feeling of sincerity and devotion are not rare.

In the following centuries some small treatises on the life of Chaitanya were written, of which one may be mentioned. It is Premadās's (the real name of the author being Puruṣottam Miśra) *Caitanyacandrodayakaumudī* (Beams of the Rise of Caitanya the Moon), an adaption (in Bengali verse) of the Sanskrit drama *Caitanyacandrodaya* by Paramānand Sen. Another and a much smaller work is *Caitanyasaṃhitā* (Caitanya Scripture) by Bhagīrath Bandhu. It follows the pattern of the 'Āgama' or tantric texts inasmuch as the story is told by Śiva to his spouse.

The divinity of Chaitanya was completely taken for granted by the people before the century was over, and therefore a prayer to Chaitanya was invariably included in the opening of all narrative poems (Vaishnav or otherwise) that were chanted and sung in assembly. Some new material (historical or legendary) on the life of the master may be

gathered from such 'Vandanā' portions of the 'Pāñcālī' poems from the late sixteenth century downward. All sessions of Kīrttan performance started with such songs on the master as were relevant to the topic or the occasion. Such songs were known as 'Gauracandrikā' (i.e. relating to Gāurāṅga the Moon).

No separate biography of Nityānanda was ever written, and all the sixteenth century biographies of Chaitanya were written by disciples or disciples' disciples of Nityānanda. These works contain all the essential information about Nityānanda's life and activities. There are however short and long poems on the life and activities of Advaita, written in Sanskrit and Bengali. But the genuineness of these works is not beyond reasonable doubt. The same remark is more strongly applicable to the small treatises in Bengali recounting the spiritual glory of Advaita's junior wife Sītā and of her two attendants.

In the closing decade of the sixteenth century and in the opening decade of the next Vaishnav activities in Bengal received a new impetus from the enthusiasm of the triumvirate, Śrīnivās Ācārya, Narottam (Datta) Dās and Śyāmānanda Dās (died 1630), who had received their training in Brindavan and had indeed been instructed by its leader then, Jīva Goswāmī, to propagate in Bengal the doctrines of the Brindavan school. Śrīnivās's activities were confined to West Bengal. Narottam, who belonged to a rich family with political connections at Gauḍ, was not so much a preacher as a mystic recluse. But his influence and fame were not confined to North and Central Bengal and he has always been the most remembered of the three. Śyāmānanda belonged to Jharkhand and he did much to spread the faith in that region. Besides the three leaders there were Jānhabā the junior wife of Nityānanda and the latter's son by the senior wife, Vīrabhadra (or Vīracandra), who were the

topmost leaders of the Bengal Vaishnavs. The activities of these and other notable Vaishnavs in Bengal became the subject matter of more than one biographical work (not of the lyrical but of the reading type) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As time wore on the influence of the Brindavan school became greater and greater so that by the beginning of the seventeenth century the Bengal school of Vaishnavism of which the gurus were the wives and children of Nityānanda and Advaita and the offspring of some other leading followers of Chaitanya, began to lose initiative and authority and the living faith was slowly smothered by the weight of the teachings of the Brindavan Goswāmins which now determined the conduct and the quest of the seeker of God. The guru who was in reality the guide on the path to God now tended to become the agent of God, till finally he stood between man and God, often completely screening Him. The office of the guru became hereditary.

But the Bengal school of Vaishnavism did not perish altogether. It became tinctured with Tantrism, and not being approved by the Brindavan Gosvāmins it had to go underground. Its followers did not care for Sanskrit learning and they wrote only in the vernacular. Their most esteemed text was *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadās in which there is an attempt at synthesis of the learned theology of the Gosvāmins and the mystic approach. The Bāuls of the later centuries were the true representatives of what may be called the underground mystic school of Bengal Vaishnavism. There is a dash of Sūfiism in it but some touch of it was already there in Chaitanya's faith. One of his right-hand men when he first proclaimed his faith at Navadvīp was Haridās, and he was a Sūfi before he had come to the Vaishnav path. To Sanātan and Rūp Sūfiism was certainly not unknown.

9

VAISHNAV LYRIC SONGS AND NARRATIVE POETRY

So far as evidence goes 'Vaishnav' lyric poetry, i.e. the lyric songs written on the love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, were written by Bengali poets serving in various capacities at the court in Gauḍ. There was still a direct political and cultural contact between Gauḍ and Mithilā. Scholars from Bengal would go to Mithilā for study as that region was not then under the direct control of Muslim rulers. It is quite probable that Mithilā where the tradition of 'Vaishnav' lyric poetry was continuing unbroken for about a couple of centuries would give a new impetus to the lyric tendency in Bengali poetry. Although the earliest available specimen of Vaishnav lyric poetry of Bengal dated from the last decades of the fifteenth century it cannot be said that it actually originated in the second half of the fifteenth century or that it was an imitation of the songs of Vidyāpati and his predecessors and contemporaries in Mithilā. There are Avahaṭṭha verses on the 'Vaishnav' theme written in Bengali in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Poets from Bengal wrote 'Vaishnav' lyrics in Nepal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is also evidence to show that Bengali lyric poetry was not unknown in Mithilā in the sixteenth century. Before that century Gauḍ was the main centre of literary contact between Bengal and Mithilā.

Vaishnav lyric poetry in Bengal is not all written in Bengali. Quite a large part of it, rather the bulk of it, is written in Brajabuli which, with its variable vowel length and moraic metre and with its archaic vocabulary and minimum of grammar, offered to the better equipped writers a sonorous instrument that was almost readymade. The Vaishnav lyrics, Bengali or Brajabuli, are songs and therefore never fully divorced from melody. The second couplet, often containing a shorter verse line, is the refrain. The poet's

name occurs in the last couplet. The peculiar musical style in which these songs are sung is known as 'Kīrttan'. This style, which must have prevailed since early times, was elaborated and developed by Narottam Dās towards the end of the sixteenth century. He held a festival on the occasion of the ceremonial installation of the deities Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Chaitanya-Nityānanda, and gave a demonstration of the new Kīrttan.

In the seventeenth century there were evolved two lighter styles of Kīrttan. These later styles absorbed much from folk music, so that they ultimately presented an altogether novel and highly expressive form of Indian music. Jayadeva's lyrics would not have survived but for their music, and the Vaishnav lyric poetry would have long gone out of fashion but for the freshness of its style of music, of which the cadence closely corresponds to the metrical rhythm of the songs.

These lyrics or songs deal mostly if not exclusively with the unwedded love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The matter as well as the form was extremely limited and stereotyped and there was very little scope for a poet's individuality. Some of the earlier writings, however, show emotional height in some individual lines and couplets, if not in the entire poem. The intense, all-consuming, self-sacrificing love of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa could be passionately and convincingly echoed by only a very few and they all belonged to the early part of the sixteenth century. When Chaitanya's teachings had been cast into the rigid frame-work of a religious cult on traditional lines and when Rūp Gosvāmin's books dictated the rules which the approved Vaishnav poetry must follow the fate of Bengali lyric poetry was sealed. In the second half of the century some gifted writers appeared but their poetry hardly came up to the earlier level. In the subsequent century Vaishnav poetry is seldom more than mere repetition.

CHAITANYA's divine passion gave a new spiritual meaning to Rādhā's love for Krishna and this is the reason why the best of the Vaishnav lyric songs were written by the direct followers of Chaitanya and their immediate followers who had seen the master. One of the earliest and best was Murāri Gupta, the oldest of the biographers. He did not write much in the vernacular and his lyric songs number less than six, two of which are among the best. One describes Rādhā's attitude to her friend's pleading against forbidden love. Rādhā says to her friend:

> My dear, go back home. How can you convince a person more dead than alive, a person who has committed suicide? The charming beauty (of my lover) ever dances before my eyes; my life is in my heart. Making a bonfire of my love I have burnt everything else: my caste, my family prestige, my good name and myself. Not knowing what love is the fools talk about me I know not what and I do not care to know. I have set myself adrift in a stream, vast and swift-flowing. What can the dogs on the bank[1] do now? In eating, in sleeping, in the act of living nothing else matters to me; nothing appeals to me but my lover. Murāri Gupta says: when love reaches such a height its glory is echoed in the three worlds.

The other poem describes the sad state of love-stricken Rādhā when Kṛṣṇa had left Brindavan. Rādhā's friend comes to Krishna at Mathurā and speaks to him:

> How hateful is the show of love you had made to Rādhā as you have left her more dead than living: her condition is now precarious. How long can a tiny fish remain alive out of water? Hear me, O fair Mādhava! You have left burning an eternal lamp, supplied with

[1] In the original 'Kula' carries a double sense, 'family' (*kula*) and 'bank' (*kūla*).

only a drop of oil. How can it go on burning without supply? And a blast will soon blow to snuff it out, I am afraid. Come back quick and save her life. I am given to understand that love sparkles only when face to face and that a friend becomes a foe when he is away. An instance is the lotus and the sun: when the lotus is taken out of water the sun only withers it, and when it withers love perishes. You are causing her as much suffering as you had given her joy; you have brought on her the plight of the moon. Gupta says: in a month the moon is entirely gone, and the new moon night happens to be the critical time.[2]

As was previously mentioned Locan, one of the biographers of Chaitanya, was a good lyric poet. He had a fair command over the colloquial vocabulary which he amply exploited. He was also daring enough to introduce the colloquial rhythm in Bengali poetry. Locan's guru Narahari also wrote some good songs. It is a notable fact that some of the songs of Narahari and Locan, in later MSS, appear with the signature of Caṇḍīdās.

Among the direct followers of Chaitanya (Chaitanya made no disciples) there were many who wrote lyric songs on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme and on the master. A few deserve special notice. Bāsudev Ghoṣ wrote almost exclusively on the early life of Chaitanya. His songs on the Krishna theme are only a few and these were not so popular. The following is a good instance of Bāsudev's poetry:

On a dark and drizzling night Rādhā is eagerly expecting a meeting with her lover—

O water-laden cloud, do you rain down with a cheer-

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[2] According to the Indian medical lore a person seriously ill rarely survives a crisis if it happens on or just before the new-moon. This would be an apt metaphor for the poet who was also a practising physician (*vaidya*).

[3] Literally 'the black one', a synonym of Kṛṣṇa.

ful heart as Śyām[3] is meeting me. Fall down in soft drizzles, so that I shall pass the night in good cheer. The clouds ramble heavily in the sky, and the frogs are beating drums as it were, and from the tree tops the peacocks cry. I shall pass the night in the embrace of the lord of the gods. In an expectation of a deeper understanding of this love between the two Bāsudev Ghoṣ has taken a plunge.

AMONG the followers of Nityānanda there were two of the best known poets, Balarāmdās and Jñānadās. They wrote mostly in Bengali and occasionally in Brajabuli. But they has come under the influence of the injunctions of Rūp Gosvāmi. Writing songs had become in the mean time an accepted mode of literary expression for the devout Vaishnavs with literary bend or musical aptitude.

Balarām's best poems include songs describing the mother Yaśodā's anxious love for Child-Gopāla (Krishna). The following poem expresses the intensity of Rādhā's newly awakened love for Krishna.

His age is young but his behaviour indicates maturity. He looks like the god of love made of emerald. I know not who fashioned his body and how. Even as one looks on him, one receives a shower of sweetness. I am indeed undone. What a beauty I have seen in a dream; as I eat or sleep it stays fixed in my heart. His lips are red, his smiles are soft and slow; by a side-glance of his dancing eyes he does havoc with a girl's home and ambition. My heart breaks when I look at the twin arches of his eye-brows. Alas, alas! Where had been such a sportive lover all these days? His gait is slow and mincing: how can I say and to whom what my heart feels? Even a chunk of stone melts at a whiff from his body; Balarāmdās says: a touch is enough to

to take away one's senses.

The best poems of Jñānadās express the same emotion, echoing almost the same expressions, as the following translation would show. Rādhā opens her heart to a friend—

> Alas! why did I go to the waters of the Kālindī.[4] The black-skinned lover has tricked me into losing my heart to him. My eyes remained drowned in the flood of his beauty; my mind was lost in the wilderness of his youthful charms; my way back home became interminable. My heart is breaking within; my soul cries out in pain. In the inscrutable black spot in the centre of the moon-shaped sandal paint[5] that he wore, the doll of my heart was entrapped. A yellow garment is wrapped round his waist, and it is tied with a girdle. The Creator has made him the cause of a girl losing her head. The social, family and moral ties are all about to fall away, I am afraid; and throughout the land this my disgrace would be proclaimed—that having once been a chaste girl from a good family I have now brought down shame on two.[6] Jñānadās says: keep your heart stout.

THE next generation of poets were largely the followers of Narottam Dās and Śrīnivās Ācārya. Narottam himself was a good writer. To him goes the credit of formulation and standardization of the Kīrttan style of music. Narottam was a rich man's only son, and from his early youth he was averse to the humdrum family life. As soon as he could manage he went away to Brindavan and there he took initiation from a disciple of Advaita Ācārya. There too he met his future colleagues in faith and propaganda, Śrīnivās Ācārya and

[4] Another name of the Yamunā.
[5] Decorative painting on the forehead.
[6] Meaning the father's and the husband's family.

Śyāmānanda Dās. In spite of the fact that Narottam had taken his directions from the Vaishnav masters of Brindavan he was never as much influenced by their way of thinking as was Śrīnivās. In Narottam there was a happy blend of the teachings of the Bengal and the Brindavan schools of Vaishnav thought. He was a Kāyastha and was not initiated in the path of Vaishnavism by some veteran of Brindavan but by Lokanāth, a disciple of Advaita. Herein may be the the clue to his individual approach. The Gosvāmins of Brindavan did not favour a purely mystic approach; instead, they adopted the psychological formulae drawn from the symbol of the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. According to them there are only two ways for the spiritually-minded: one, the learned philosophical way and the other, the common ritualistic way. Narottam would not go for the first, so he took up the second. At the same time the mystic in him was always strong. That is why among all his illustrious contemporaries only Narottam was able to impart a new force to Vaishnav faith and poetry, and he has been the best remembered among them.

In later time Narottam was reckoned as a guru of the Tantrist school of Vaishnavism and consequently a number of very short treatises was fathered on him. The genuine works of Narottam, besides the prayer poems and songs, are a few short treatises on Vaishnav devotion and practice, the most important of which, *Premabhakticandrikā* (Moonbeam of Devotional Love), has not lost its popularity even today. The poem shows unmistakable influence of Kṛṣṇadās's *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*. The prototype of *Premabhakticandrikā* was Rāmcandra Kavirāj's *Smaraṇadarpaṇ* (Mirror of Remembrance). Rāmcandra was a good scholar and belonged to a high family. His mother's father, known as Yaśorāj Khān, was an officer of Husain Shah. Rāmcandra was at first a worshipper of Śakti, but at an advanced age he came under the influence of Śrīnivās Ācārya and took initiation from him. Qualities of head and heart won for him the

friendship and estimation of Narottam. Rāmcandra wrote a few songs of which one is of outstanding merit. It expresses Rādhā's agonies out of forbidden love.

> To whom shall I reveal the secret of my heart? Who will be convinced? Mortal pain grips my vitals. My nerves are on the edge. I cannot remain for long in the company of my seniors in the family; my eyes are ever filled with tears, there is always goose flesh on my limbs. When I look aside I find only darkness.[7] When I go to the river with a friend—well, it is a feeling that cannot be described. The waters of the Yamunā, and my long tresses loosened: at such a sight how can I remain calm? I cannot any longer keep the honour of my family unsullied; this I proclaim before all. Rāmacandra says: The dark-skinned lover is ever present before her mind's eye.

Govindadās Kavirāj, the younger brother of Rāmcandra, was the best writer of Brajabuli poetry. Before he took to the Vaishnav path Govindadās was like his brother a Śakti worshipper, had even written songs in praise of Śiva and Śakti; and, like his brother, Govindadās too became a disciple of Śrīnivās. Only one of his Śākta poems has been preserved. Govindadās's literary activity reached its height only after his conversion when he had recovered from a grave and protracted illness. He wrote hundreds of lyrical songs, almost all of them in Brajabuli. Govindadās was a good Sanskrit scholar, and he utilized his Sanskrit learning in the cultivation of Bengali poetry. He had a fine ear for rhythm and assonance, he had thoroughly imbibed the spirit of the secular poetry in Sanskrit and Prakrit and mastered the ornate style of Maithil and Brajabuli lyric poetry. He was acclaimed as the best Vaishnav poet of the day and Jīva Gosvāmin the then leader of the Vaishnav world, bestowed

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[7] There is double meaning here: 'śyāma' meaning 'dark, darkness' or Kṛṣṇa.

on him the title of 'Kavirāj' (king of poets).

Govindadās's songs are resonant with the harmony of sound and sense, although they are lacking in variety as well as in depth of feeling. In a way Govindadās's success led to a speedy degeneration of Vaishnav poetry as the direction of appeal was diverted from the heart to the ear. The succeeding generations of writers of Brajabuli songs tried only to imitate him.

As a specimen of Govindadās's poetry one of his best poems is given below. Unfortunately a translation cannot convey the music of the original.

On a dark, windy and rainy night Rādhā is about to slip out from home in search of her lover, and her girl friend tries to dissuade her from this precarious venture—

> To be outside of the house there is the stout door to negotiate, and the muddy and slippery road makes walking difficult. Besides there is a tremendous storm raging. Can your blue *sari* resist the downpour? My beauty, how can you now go out to meet the lover when he is staying on the other side of the Mānasa-gaṅgā? At every moment there is thunder cracking and booming, and it would blast the drum of the ear. In all directions lightning flashes incessantly, which would dazzle the eyes and make them blind. In spite of this, O lovely lady, if you would still be leaving home you would be only throwing away your life for the sake of love. Govindadās says: there is nothing to consider here. Can a dart flung out be ever sped back?

Govindadās wrote a short play in Sanskrit dealing with some of the love episodes of Rādhā and Krishna. His Sanskrit songs undoubtedly and some of his vernacular songs probably featured in this play, *Saṅgītamādhava-nāṭaka*. The work is known only from a few citations.

There was another poet named Govindadās who also was a disciple of Śrīnivās. This second Govindadās was a

brahman whereas the first Govindadās was a Vaidya. The brahman poet, Govindadās Cakravartī, wrote mostly in Bengali. His diction is easy and unostentatious, and some of his songs breathe the sincerity of love's distress.

There were not a few poets with only one or two poems each to their credit. But some of these poems are of outstanding quality. One such is the following song by a poet who signed himself as Kavivallabh (beloved of poets). It echoes the insatiable hunger of high passion and unfathomable love.

> My friend, do you want to know my feelings? When I think of my love and passion it feels fresh every moment. From the day of my birth I have been feeding on that beauty, but my eyes never have their fill. Millions of ages I have held him close, heart against heart, lips against lips, but still the fire of the passion is not quenched. The divine sweetness of his speech I have enjoyed so often but it always gives fresh joy to hear him speak. So many springtime nights I have spent in rapture, still I cannot come to the end of love's delight. There are so many experienced people talk glibly of love but true appreciation I find not in any of them. Says Kavivallabh: to have the fire of love quenched falls but to one among a hundred thousand.

LONG narrative poems on the Krishna legend, with or without lyric songs interspersed, were written by about a score of the sixteenth century writers. Some of them were direct followers of Chaitanya or their disciples. Among the former were Govind Ācārya, Raghu Paṇḍit, Paramānanda Gupta and Mādhav Ācārya ; and among the latter Kṛṣṇadās, 'Kaviśekhar', Śyāmdās and others. Raghu Paṇḍit was a professional reciter ('Kathaka') of the *Bhāgavata*, and so he was known as 'Bhāgavatācārya'. His *Kṛṣṇaprematarangiṇī* (River

of Divine Love) is an adaptation of the *Bhāgavata* chapter by chapter. Mādhav Ācārya's *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgal* is the biggest of such poems. It narrates the Kṛṣṇa legend in full as in the *Bhāgavata.* But unlike most of the contemporary writers on the theme he did not fail to incorporate the amorous episodes of popular origin such as the toll collection and ferry incidents. But these episodes are not fully integrated to the theme as in 'Baḍu' Caṇḍīdās's poem but remain as mere interludes. Mādhav made Baḍāi not as a go-between but as a dutiful chaperone of the young girl. Mādhav's diction is simple and easy. The lyrical element is proportionate to the narrative. On the whole the poem fully deserves the popularity which it has held for centuries. The following would illustrate the descriptive power of Mādhav Ācārya:

Rādhā and her friends are on their way to Mathurā to sell their commodities. They came to the bank of the Yamunā and were accosted by Krishna waiting as the boatman. Kṛṣṇa speaks to Rādhā—

> My boat is a nice one; whoever gets into it willingly pays sixty-four scores of cowrie. Your hips are heavy and your breasts are bulging; you alone weigh as heavy as ten passengers. Look here, you cowherd girl. I know you are a stiff proposition. Fix the fare, come quick and get into the boat. Your commodities that are to be carried in my boat are indeed precious, but what shall I get out of it? Think over and offer a fair sum so that there will be no haggling afterwards. This is my livelihood. You are a young lady and I am a young boatman; the time is passing in useless pleasantries. Somebody is calling me from the other bank; I am detained uselessly. By this time I could have made three trips. First give me some cream, butter, milk and curd to eat so that I may get some strength for plying the boat. Mādhav the brahman says: the lord of the Yadus is a veteran lover; his talks hide his intention.

'Kaviśekhar' was the pen-name of Devakīnandan Siṃha who wrote in Sanskrit as well as in Bengali. His Sanskrit works include an 'epic' as well as a play on the Kṛṣṇa legend. His Bengali works on the same topic comprise a number of lyric songs and a narrative poem. The last, entitled *Gopāl-vijay* (Triumph of the Cowherd Boy), shows rather close similarity to the poem of 'Baḍu' Caṇḍīdās in regard to the amorous episodes. His apology for including these erotic non-Puranic stories was that he had a command in dream from Krishna to do so.

To the second half of the sixteenth century belonged *Govindamaṅgal* of Śyāmadās who called himself 'the distressed' (*Duḥkhī*). The story follows the pattern of Kaviśekhar's work. The style is simple and subdued. There are occasional flashes of genuine poetry.

10

THE TRADITION OF COURT PATRONAGE

So far as actual evidence goes the first lyric poems or songs in Brajabuli written in Bengal came from the pen of persons enjoying kingly support. The oldest known of such poems was written by a court pundit (rāja-paṇḍita) of Dhanyamāṇikya of Tipperah (reigned 1490-1526). The next song belongs to Yaśorāj Khān (who was the same person as Dāmodar Sen of Śrīkhaṇḍa) an employee of Husain Shāh. Both Husain Shāh and his sons Nasrat and Giyāsuddīn are mentioned in lyric poems by their court poets (or poet) who signed as Kavirañjan or Kaviśekhar. At the court of Naranārāyaṇ of Coochbehar we find Śaṅkardev and Dhīreśvar writing Brajabuli songs in honour of the king. Husain Shāh's grandson Fīrūz had asked his court-poet Śrīdhar, a brahman, to write a poem on the Vidyā-Sundar story.

As has been already mentioned the two earliest *Mahābhārata* narratives in Bengali were written under the patronage of two provincial satraps under Husain Shāh. The third poem of the sort (a short version of the Aśvamedha story from the *Jaiminīya-Saṃhitā,* like Śrīkara Nandī's poem) was written by an administrative officer of Husain Shāh, Rāmcandra Khān. When Chaitanya first went to Puri after his initiation into religious mendicancy, Rāmcandra Khān who was then military governor of the lower Gangetic region, helped him in safely crossing over the Bengal-Orissa boundary. Rāmcandra's poem was written in 1532. It is purely narrative. There is an occasional touch of refreshing realism. Rāmcandra seems to have written a complete *Mahābhārata* poem in Bengali. The third poem on the *Jaiminīya-Saṃhitā* was written by Raghunāth, a brahman, sometime about 1567. The poet read his poem at the court of Mukundadev, the last independent king of Orissa. The popularity of the *Jaiminīya* Aśvamedha story was unabated

at the courts of semi-independent rulers and zamindars during the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. Under the patronage of the Malla kings of Bishnupur and of other zamindars on the borderlands of Bengal several persons wrote poems on the theme.

By the middle of the sixteenth century the court of Kāmatā (Coochbehar) had built up something like a literary tradition. It began with the accession of Viśvasiṃha (1522) who began a thorough aryanization of the court *entourage*. His eldest son Samarasiṃha was a patron of Bengali poetry during his father's lifetime. At his request the court poet Pītāmbar rendered into Bengali verse the stories from *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* in 1530 and fourteen years later he took the *Mahābhārata* story for his *Naladamayantīcarita* (Activities of Nala and Damayantī). The other known work of Pītāmbar is an adaptation of the Krishna story from the *Bhāgavata*. Viśvasiṃha was succeeded by his son Naranārāyaṇ (reigned 1554-87). Naranārāyaṇ's younger brother and Commander-in-Chief Śukladhvaj (d. 1571) was almost the joint king. The two brothers were liberal patrons of poetry and scholarship. The vernacular poetry in lower Assam which was initiated in the court of Kāmarūp and Kāchār thrived under the patronage of the Kāmatā court.

Śaṅkardev (d. 1568) the pioneer of the new Vaishnavism in Assam completed the *Rāmāyaṇa* poem of Mādhav Kandalī (written at the instance of Mahāmāṇikya, the Varāha king of Kāmarūp and Kāchār) by adding the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*. Śaṅkar's grandfather was an officer of the Varāha king. His native village was on the bank of the Brahmaputra. Śaṅkar's unorthodox social activities were too much for the brahman orthodoxy of Assam, and he had to seek shelter under king Naranārāyaṇ of Kāmatā. Almost all of Śaṅkar's vernacular works were written here. Śaṅkar's chief disciple Mādhavadev also enjoyed the protection and patronage of the Kāmatā court. Mādhav's vernacular works include a book of devotional poems and songs and two narrative poems on the

Krishna story.

The court of Naranārāyaṇ and Śukladhvaj was the gathering place of poets and pundits from all parts of the country. So says one of the court poets Aniruddha:

> All glory to Naranārāyaṇ the greatest of kings ; like him there is no other king. Devotional and moral treatises, Purāṇas, the *Mahābhārata,* and all—he talks about them day and night, seated in his court. All the pundits who had been in Gauḍ and in Kāmrūp are now established in his court of learning and culture. There the poets always talk only of books and scriptures. He has accepted me also and has given me a corner seat in that court.

Śukladhvaj was especially interested in poetry, Sanskrit and vernacular. At his instance one of the court poets Aniruddha (who bore the title of his office 'Rāmasarasvatī') rendered into Bengali verse the story of the several books of the *Mahābhārata.* In the beginning of the poem Aniruddha thus describes the inducements offered to him by his patrons:

> Śukladhvaj, the younger brother of the king, and crown prince, is deeply wise and he achieves wonders. He commanded me with great pleasure—'Do you render the *Bhārata* into "Payāra" verse. In my home there are complete codices of the *Bhārata* ; you can take them to your home ; I give them all to you.' After saying this he ordered pack bullocks and sent the book loads over to me. Articles of food he supplied in plenty ; he appointed men and maids to serve me. And I took this his command on my head, and holding the two feet of Kṛṣṇa close to my heart I now write the lines of verse, unequalled, and very sweet, which are called the *Vana-parva.*

Śukladhvaj wrote—that is, some pundit wrote for him—

an elaborate commentary on Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*. This commentary was the basis of Aniruddha's poem *Jayadeva* which narrates the theme of Jayadeva's lyrics in the context of the *Bhāgavata* story.

The Kāmatā (later Coochbehar) court never withdrew patronage to pundits and poets in the subsequent centuries. The successors of Naranārāyaṇ and Śukladhvaj were all lovers of the epic and Purāṇa tales. So their court poets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were mainly occupied in rendering these tales into narrative verse. The *Mahābhārata* stories were handled by about a score of poets, and about a dozen of them were occupied in the adaptation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The following *Purāṇas* received the attention of the vernacular poets of the court: *Brahmavaivarta, Dharma, Mārkaṇḍeya, Nāradīya, Nṛsiṃha, Padma, Śiva, Skanda,* and *Viṣṇu.*

Other chiefs and rulers of North-east and South-east Bengal emulated the Kāmatā court in lending support to writers who clothed the Vaishnav Purāṇic stories in the vernacular garb. Govindamāṇikya of Tipperah appointed his court poet 'Siddhāntasarasvatī' to translate into Bengali verse the *Bṛhat-Nāradīya-Purāṇa* (1669). He was so pleased with the result that he made the members of his court and some of his prominent subjects have copies of the poem transcribed for their own use. Hemasarasvatī, the son of a minister of Durlabhanārāyaṇ of Ḍarang, rendered many Purāṇic stories into Bengali narrative verse. Bhavānīnāth, the author of a narrative poem based on the *Adhyātma-rāmāyaṇa,* was a court poet of Jagatmāṇikya. While engaged in writing the poem he received a remuneration of ten rupees a day.

Some of the ladies of these ruling houses also were patrons of letters. Candraprabhā the widowed wife of Tāmradhvaj of Kāchāṛ was one such. At her instance Bhuvaneśvar Vācaspati wrote in 1730 *Nāradīrasāmṛit* (Nectarian Essence of Nāradīya), a metrical adaptation of

Nāradīya Purāṇa. Since then the Kāchāṛ court became thoroughly Vaishnav and literary-minded. Govindanārāyaṇ (reigned 1813-31) the last king of Kāchāṛ was himself a good writer of Vaishnav songs and he has two books of songs to his credit.

The literary tradition of Chittagong initiated by Parāgal Khān and his son was taken up a century later by the court of Arrakan when it came under the cultural influence of Bengal. The activities of the court poets of Arrakan who were all Muslims are dealt with in a later chapter.

Semi-independent chiefs of South-west Bengal which was practically outside the ambit of the Moghul rule extended perfunctory help to Bengali poets and scholars in distress. None of them, except the biggest and the most important of them, the Malla rulers of Bishnupur, attempted to build up a literary and scholastic tradition in their court. Culture by way of Vaishnavism first crossed the lawless boundaries of the Malla chiefs when Śrīnivās Ācārya won the heart of Bīr Hāmbīr the then king of Bishnupur. In less than a century Vaishnavism prevailed throughout a vast territory of jungles and hills which was sparsely populated by a semi-barbaric and fierce people. The hospitality of the court of Bishnupur was open to all Vaishnavs, mendicants or otherwise. Towards the close of the seventeenth century a cultural tradition was fully built up at the Malla court. Magnificent temples in brick were built by the court architects, and the court poets, carrying the general title of 'Kavicandra' (Moon of a Poet), wrote *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* poems in Bengali and treated the Krishna legend variously in lyric and narrative verse.

The culmination was reached during the rule of Gopālasiṃha (1712-48). He was a most staunch Vaishnav, and he wanted all his people to be so. He compelled his subjects to take the name of God as a daily ritual in the evening. Delinquency, if detected, incurred heavy punishment. It was also a law of the land that on the eleventh day

('Ekādaśī') of the fortnight (which is sacred to a Vaishnav) no one except the sick, the nursing mother and the child, could take food in the day time, and fodder was prohibited in the king's stable and cowpen. Gopālasiṃha's charity reached all and sundry, and so many writers sang his praise. One of his court poets wrote a *Kṛṣṇamaṅgal* poem for him. The senior court poet ('Kavicandra') Śaṅkar Cakravartī was a prolific writer. The queens and princesses of Bishnupur were among the best educated ladies in Eastern India.

The literary patronage of the Malla court was emulated by some of the neighbouring chiefs and zamindars. At the instance of Ananta-Dhaval of Dhalbhum, his court poet Jagannāth Sen translated *Hitopadeśa* into Bengali verse some time at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The first zamindar of North Bengal to appear as a patron of Bengali poetry was Rāmakṛṣṇa of Sāntol (Pabna) who flourished in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Nityānanda Ācārya, entitled 'Adbhutācārya' (Master of the Adbhuta), who wrote a *Rāmāyaṇa* poem based on the version of the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa,* was his court poet. Nityānanda's poem was very popular in North Bengal and much of it has been incorporated in the vulgate text of Kṛttivās's poems. Another protégé of Rāmakṛṣṇa, Śrīkṛṣṇajīvan Dās wrote a *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* poem.

11

NARRATIVE POETRY ON CAṆḌĪ AND MANASĀ

OUTSIDE Vaishnav poetry the most significant work of the sixteenth century is *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* by Mukundarām Chakravartī. The oldest writer of such poems by reputation was Māṇik Datta, and Mukundarām mentions that he based his own work on the 'standardized narrative' ('Dāṁrā') of Māṇik Datta. But the poem of Maṇik Datta as known to us in a late eighteenth century manuscript from North Bengal cannot have been the work which inspired Mukundarām. Besides its other late features there are clear references to Chaitanya and his faith. The poem, however, is not altogether devoid of such materials as are obviously old.

The author of this *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* cannot be the old Māṇik Datta mentioned by Mukundarām. The traditional story of the 'original' Māṇik Datta who appears to have introduced the ritual song of Caṇḍī in South-west Bengal (or Kaliṅga), is thus given in the poem of our (second) Māṇik Datta:

On Caṇḍī's victory over the Asuras her supremacy was accepted by the gods. After a time the goddess wanted that men should worship her by celebrating her deeds in song and dance. Nārada advised her to reveal her ritual to Māṇik Datta, a deformed man, deaf and lame. In the guise of a very old woman Caṇḍī came to Māṇik Datta when he was in deep slumber. She told him to formulate her popular ritual and to write her story in verse. She assured him that his two sons Raghu and Rāghav would be his assistants. She then passed a divine hand over the sleeping man, and his deformities vanished. The goddess disappeared after leaving the book of her ritual at the top of the bed. On awakening in the morning Māṇik Datta found himself a new man. As the book of ritual given to him by Caṇḍī was written in Sanskrit which he did not know he

had to take the help of Śrīkānta Paṇḍit. The pundit explained to him the Sanskrit verses and Māṇik Datta rendered them into Bengali verse. The poem was complete in some three hundred lyric poems ('Nācāḍī'). He now set up a party to sing and chant the song publicly. Māṇik Datta himself was the main singer ('Gāyak'), his sons Raghu and Rāghav acted as the supporting singers ('Pāli'), and Śrīkānta Paṇḍit played the drum (*mṛdaṅga*). The party went to Kaliṅga and sang and chanted it from door to door and it became widely popular. The king of Kaliṅga came to learn that a new mode of worship by song and dance was distracting his men from their duty. Māṇik Datta was summoned to account for his peculiar activities. He told the king his story but the king refused to believe that Caṇḍī would care to offer grace to such a petty fellow, and he had the poet imprisoned as a suspect. At night the goddess came to the sleeping king with a ferocious mien and told him to release the poet in the morning. After this incident the king became the best patron of Māṇik.

The story is entirely legendary. But there might have been some mythological core. It appears that Māṇik was not a brahman (as all later writers of such poetry were) and that this cult originated in or came *via* Kaliṅga.

Caṇḍīmaṅgal by Mādhav the brahman ('dvija') was written in 1579 when, according to the poet, Akbar, an incarnation of the epic hero Arjuna, was the master of Bengal. (This is the first mention of a Mughal ruler in Bengali literature.) The poet says he was a native of Satgaon on the bank of the Hooghly, but there is some doubt about the authenticity of this statement. All the manuscripts of the poem (the oldest dated only 1759) came from remote East Bengal, mainly from Chittagong, and none from West Bengal. There can be only one explanation, *viz.* that since the poet or his family had migrated to East Bengal and the poem was written there, there was no chance of its being known in West Bengal.

Mādhav's poem is a comparatively short work. The introductory story of Śiva and Satī, his marriage with Pārvatī, and their domestic life are absent. Instead there is the very short episode of the goddess's victory over the demon Maṅgal accounting for her name Maṅgal-Caṇḍī. The story of Kālaketu is much shorter than the story of Dhanapati. The canvas of the poem being narrow there was little room for the development of the characters.

There is a narrative poem (*Gaṅgāmaṅgal*) on the story of the Gaṅgā and her descent on the earth, written by one Mādhav, also a brahman. This poet seems to have been a follower of Chaitanya's faith. In spite of the fact that the colophons of the two works bearing the signature of Mādhav the brahman are often identical there is no reason to assume identity of authorship.

Caṇḍimaṅgal of Mukundarām Cakravartī 'Kavikaṅkaṇa' superseded the earlier works (if any) and forestalled any serious later attempt. It is a work substantial in volume and representative in character, and it served as a model to be followed by all the later writers of 'Maṅgal' poetry in West Bengal. By prefacing his poem with an autobiographical account Mukundarām started a vogue among the narrative poets of West Bengal which replaced the earlier dream excuse by a manifestation of the divinity commanding its celebration in poetry and song.

Mukundarām belonged to a brahman family at Dāmunyā (now in the southern border of the district of Burdwan) in West Bengal, depending on the produce of a few acres of ancestral land. During the critical days when the Pathan power was about to give way to the arms of Sher Shah in West Bengal the agrarian economy of West Bengal was almost completely upset. The old Pathan and Hindu zamindars were being deprived of their possessions which were being given to Afghan chiefs and many of their tenants who could not produce any documentary evidence suddenly found themselves landless. The Mughal administration brought

revenue and land settlement officers from outside the province and so they had little understanding of the situation and no sympathy for the luckless. The new rulers created new zamindars who wanted to grab as much land and collect as much rent as they could. Mukundarām was one of the luckless. His ancestral inheritance, a few acres of cultivated land, had been ample for the simple needs of his family for some seven generations. Being a sub-tenancy of a Hindu zamindar who was loyal to the house of Husain Shāh and was now in disfavour, Mukundarām's land was confiscated. But he was not alone to suffer thus. The distress that was then common to the people is thus feelingly described by him:

> Glory to Rājā Mānsing, a bee at the lotus feet of Viṣṇu, who is now on the march from Gauḍ and Bengal to Orissa. But during (those) days of an impious king the land was bestowed (as a *jagir*) on Māmud Sarif, and Rāyzāda who became the revenue minister was hostile to traders and merchants and was an enemy of brahmans and Vaishnavs. The length of areas were measured diagonally; a 'bighā' was computed at fifteen 'kāthās';[1] and people's protests were not heeded. The collector was as relentless as a messenger of Death: he recorded barren land as fertile, and without giving any help he exacted a primium. The cashier was as unscrupulous as the devil, and he deducted a discount of two annas and a half for a rupee and charged an interest of a pice per rupee per day. The toll collectors were cheats and rascals: they imposed fines on persons for commodities belonging to others; they committed robbery in broad daylight. The other officers were the most vicious of the lot; they were but leeches in sucking the sap of the people; they carried away things before the eyes of the owners. The local

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[1] Twenty 'kaṭhās' make a 'bighā' (about one-third of an acre).

officer was a good-for-nothing fellow. Labour could not be hired for love or money. Nobody would buy paddy or cattle. My lord Gopīnāth Nandī, as ill luck would have it, suffered imprisonment; there was no chance of his release. At every door a bailiff stood close guard lest the defaulter should run away, and the people, cleaned of their store of crops, were ready to sell their tools and essential furnitures, but a rupee was worth only ten annas and there were no buyers even for paddy or cattle.

On the advice of his friendly neighbours Mukundarām with his wife, infant son and a younger brother (and probably also with a friend of the family) left the ancestral home to seek his fortune in the south outside the Afghan dominion, where a brahman settler was not wholly unwelcome. A few miles away from home they fell victim to a cheat and lost the small funds in their possession. Immediate disaster was averted by the prompt hospitality offered by a charitable man of the locality. Mukundarām has not failed to mention the names of both the robber and the charitable man. After a stay of three days the poet and his family were again on the move in a south-westerly course and crossing over some four or five rivers and covering a good distance they reached the outskirts of a village on a fateful morning, thoroughly exhausted in mind and body. The day was hot and they sat down for a few hours in the meagre shelter of a drying tank. The poet had his bath without the usual rubbing with oil and then performed his daily worship of the family deity Gopāla he was carrying with him, but the only offering he could manage were some water lilies in bloom and a piece of their root. For them there was only the water of the tank to feed and the child was crying for rice. Mukundarām sat huddled in a corner and was dozing when he dreamt that his mother came to him and took his head on her lap. Then she changed into the goddess Caṇḍī and giving him blessings

asked him to celebrate her in song. This happy dream heartened the poet. This happened in the Śaka year 1466 (A.D. 1544). The refugees then struck camp and crossing over the Śilāi came to Āḍaḍā (between Chandrakonā and Khirpāi in Ghatal, Midnapore) where the peregrination ended. Mukundarām approached Bāṅkuḍā Ray the brahman ruling chief who forthwith came to the help of the destitute family and appointed Mukundarām as tutor and companion of his young son Raghunāth.

The security of a settled life made the poet forgetful of his promise made to the goddess in dream although his old companion reminded him occasionally. A mishap in the family ultimately awakened Mukundarām to his remissness and no time was now lost in writing the poem. This happened during the regime of Raghunāth Rāy (reigned 1573-1603) the son and successor of Baṅkuḍā. The mention of Mansingh as on march to Orissa fixes the terminal date of composition as 1589. The poem was chanted and sung at the instance of Raghunāth who was highly pleased with the composition and its recital. In the old traditional way he awarded the poet a pair of bangles[2] and other ornaments, a pair of clothes and turban and a riding horse. The singers also were suitably rewarded.

Mukundarām's poem is in three parts. The first part stands as an independent poem. It deals with the Purānic story of Śiva, of his first wife Satī and of his second wife Pārvatī (Gaurī, Durgā, or Caṇḍī). Much of its matter came from indigenous folk poetry; for instance the marriage ceremony of Śiva and Pārvatī, Śiva continuing to live with his father-in-law's family, and the poverty-stricken and unpleasant home-life of the divine couple. This part may have been written as an independent 'Śivāyana' poem when the poet had not left home and had been performing the daily worship of the village deity. In

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[2] Whence the title 'Kavikaṅkaṇ'.

the treatment of the Śiva story Mukundarām was closely imitated by the later writers on the theme such as Rāmeśvar and Bhāratcandra (eighteenth century) but has never been surpassed by them. The second part of the poem is the 'Ākhaṭi Khaṇḍa' (Fowler Section) and the third part the 'Vaṇik Khaṇḍa' (Merchant Section). These two are the main stories of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal.*

Mukundarām was a shrewd observer of men and manners. Throughout his long poem there are occasional glimpses of the diverse types of humanity presented in their strength and weakness. The poet had suffered much in his life, and he had enough justification for being bitter against the tyrannical rich. This bitterness found expression only in stray lines and did not spoil the serenity of his outlook. The individual characters as well as the social groups are drawn sharply and with understanding and sympathy. I give an illustration:

Kālaketu was slaughtering the beasts of the forest indiscriminately, and the victims could not do anything about it. At last they came weeping to their protecting goddess Caṇḍī. Mukundarām presents the animals as they were tearfully placing their grievances before the goddess almost as human beings with idiosyncracies and individualities. No doubt the poet here remembered his own anxious days before he had left his old home—

> The lion said: Mother, without any offence on my part you have taken away grace. It is you that made me the king of animals, but as my brother is no more I should better forgo kingship and serve as your mount.
>
> The bear said: Merciful lady, I am really a creature that lives on ants and insects. I am neither a Niyogi nor a Caudhurī,[3] nor am I a landholder. Under your assurance, Mother, I have been here. But I have lost

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[3] High officers of State.

> my wife and seven sons and there are two grandchildren to rear.
>
> The cow elephant grovelled in the dust and wept. She appealed to the goddess pitifully and said: My son, dark and handsome, who had a white birth mark on the forehead shaped like the moon and illuminating the woods, is no more. We are the topmost in fame, in family and in looks, yet there is no place for us to hide from the sight of Kālaketu. What can we do? Where can we go? Where can we find safety? Our own tusks are our enemies.
>
> The hare wept spasmodically and said: I served the goddess of boundless charity but still my miseries do not end. We live underground and know well how to hide ourselves. But it is of little avail for Kālaketu pours water into my hole. My children, four sons and two daughters, were killed, and likewise my wife. What is the good of going on living at this old age?

The subject matter of the poem is mythological in origin and religious in character. Nevertheless, Mukundarām managed to weave into it a large measure of the contemporary social life and atmosphere of West Bengal. Bengali life, starting with the birth ceremony of a child and ending with the town settlement of the various castes and creeds, received very close attention from Mukundarām. A vein of humour runs through his descriptions which has saved the long poem from being monotonous and pedestrian. The poet was a good Hindu who had no special reason to be partial to the Muslims, but his description of the Muslim settlers in the newly founded capital town of Kālaketu shows intimate knowledge, understanding and sympathy, if not partiality. For the Pathans the poet has nothing but praise:

> They are very large-hearted; they do not harass anybody; they do not give up fasting even on pain of death. They put on the Pathan dress, they are shaven-headed,

> but they grow a beard that screens the chest. They do not give up their own ways of life; they wear ten-fold turbans on their heads; they wear slack trousers firmly girt. They do not speak to a man that is not wearing a headgear; they cudgel his head instead.

The major characters are few but not as individual as the minor ones invariably are. The major characters had to be on the traditional pattern and the poet had very little option over them. But in a deft line or two he reveals the hidden depth of the minor characters and so renders the vague outlines into distinct figures. The goldsmith Murāri Sīl was not at home to Kālaketu as long as he thought the fowler had come to dun him for the meat supplied. But he came out all sunshine the moment he understood that Kālaketu had come to sell a jewel. The housemaid Durbalā took her time to submit her shopping bill. These are some of the glowing instances of Mukundarām's light and deft touches. The delightful rogue Bhāṁru Datta as painted by Mukundarām is almost immortal in Indian literature.

With the exception of a very few Vaishnav writers Mukundarām was the best writer not only of the century but of the entire Middle Bengali literature, showing varied knowledge and culture. He judiciously utilized his learning but he never allowed it to get the better of poetic fancy and clarity of style. As a result his poem presents a gallery of good pictures of the domestic, social, economic and cultural life of the day and of the region. There is no ostentation of learning; at the same time loudness or vulgarity of any sort is absent. The diction is chaste, the vocabulary rich. Foreign words that had become more or less naturalized were not shunned.

Mukundarām's *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* is a narrative poem to be chanted and sung. Lyric songs imbedded in it are very few. A good instance of such a song is the following, a lullaby.

> Come, come, my child. What do you cry for, my love? What do you want? I shall cull for you the flowers

from heaven, each priced a lakh. I shall make a garland of them for you. Cry no more, my heart's love. I shall lay a snare in the dome of the sky, and I shall trap in the moon of the heavens. That moon I shall put in as paste on your forehead. Tomorrow I shall get you a ball made of gold to play. I shall give you cream and sweets to eat and scent to wear ; I shall give you camphor, tender betel leaf and soft betelnut to chew. I shall get for you a rich marriage dowry including a chariot, elephants and horses, and I shall marry you to the daughters of a couple of princes. My Śrīmanta shall sail in a golden boat. I shall rub his limbs softly with camphor and musk. Fanned with a chowrie he shall sleep on a fourposter. Thus sings Mukunda in his *Ambikāmaṅgal*.[4]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a few *Caṇḍī-maṅgal* poems were written. But they had no chance against the overwhelming and universal popularity of Mukundarām's work which served for the later writers as the norm of 'Maṅgal' poetry. Of the poems on the story of Manasā only one can be assigned to the sixteenth century with any assurance. This is Nārāyaṇ Dev's *Manasāmaṅgal*. The poet belonged to North-east Bengal but his great-great-grandfather had come from West Bengal (Rāḍha) to settle by the Brahmaputrā. It was possibly this family that introduced the poetry of Manasā in North-east Bengal. Nārāyaṇ Dev's poem was very popular, and all the later writers of the theme from East and North-east Bengal were more or less indebted to him. The manuscripts are not older than the eighteenth century, and these are all mixed up with the works of several later writers and singers of *Manasāmaṅgal* poetry. The story of Śiva and Pārvatī forms the introductory part of Nārāyaṇ Dev's poem and this is a peculiarity.

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[4] Literally 'Poem of the Mother Goddess', another name of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal*.

Nārāyaṇ often added the epithet 'Sukavi' (Good Poet) to his name. This led to the name 'Sukavi-nārāyaṇa' by which his poem came to be known later. This name was corrupted into 'Sukanānni', and this is the title by which Nārāyaṇ's poem is now known in the Western districts of Assam.

Fragmentary manuscripts of two *Manasāmaṅgal* poems from Kāmarūp (Western Assam) have recently come to light. The authors Manakar and Durgāvar probably belonged to the seventeenth century or even earlier. There is some affinity with the poem of Nārāyaṇ Dev. The latter's poem has enjoyed a special vogue in Western Assam.

12

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

FROM the last quarter of the sixteenth century Bengal was no longer an independent territory and the administration of the country was no more in the hands of the natives of Bengal. The provincial governors as well as the high officers now came from Delhi and Agra. A new group of landholders and feudal chiefs came into existence and they always looked for favours from the Mughal court.

The most noticeable thing in literature in the seventeenth century is the almost mechanical repetition of Vaishnav lyrics and equally unoriginal continuity of the narrative ('Maṅgal') poetry which was fast losing novelty and freshness. Of the new trends the most significant was the appearance of the romantic and non-religious narrative tales in verse to be sung and chanted ('Pāñcālī' but not 'Maṅgal') based on Hindi and Persian originals, and this poetry was almost exclusively cultivated by the Muslim writers from remote South-east Bengal. A cryptic and halting prose style of the aphoristic sort was adopted by the native school of Vaishnav mystics in writing down their instructions to the neophyte but such handbooks hardly belong to literature. Some of the Roman Catholic priests and missionaries, Portuguese and Bengali, followed suit. But their attempts, although more elaborate, were equally abortive.

The most famous literary work of the century, more by accident than by merit, is the *Mahābhārata* poem (called *Pāṇḍavvijay*) ascribed to Kāśīrām Dev (or Dās). Second only to Kṛttivās's *Rāmāyaṇa* poem, Kāśīrām's work has ever since been the most universally popular book in the language. The whole poem goes by the authorship of Kāśīrām but it is in fact a compilation. Kāśīrām wrote only the first four sections ('Parva'). The next two or three sections were written by Nandarām, a nephew of Kāśīrām. The remaining sections are taken from the works of Nityānanda Ghoṣ (who wrote a

short *Mahābhārata* poem some time before the end of the seventeenth century) and others. Kāśīrām wrote his poem in the first decade of the century. He belonged to South-west Bengal but his family had come from the North Rāḍha on the west bank of the Hooghly.

Kāśīrām was the second of three brothers. The elder brother Śrīkṛṣṇakiṅkar became a Vaishnav recluse and wrote a narrative poem on the Krishna story following the *Bhāgavata.* The younger brother Gadādhar was living in Cuttack in Orissa when he wrote the narrative poem *Jagannāthmaṅgal* (briefly *Jagatmaṅgal*), eulogy of the deity Jagannāth at Puri. This work is based on several Purāṇas and was written in 1643. Other persons to write such a poem were Candracūḍ Āditya (1676), Mukunda 'the brahman' (early eighteenth century) and Viśvambhardās (close of the eighteenth century).

SANSKRIT works of the Vaishnav masters of Brindavan were avidly translated or abriged into Bengali verse. The most successful writer of this type was Yadunandandās, a follower of Hemalatādevī the eldest daughter of Śrīnivās Ācārya. Vernacular renderings of the *Purāṇas* were fast gaining in popularity, specially in the courts of feudatory chiefs in the border regions, North-east and South-west. Adaptations of the Caṇḍī story from *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* were specially popular in North and North-east Bengal. The *Bhagavadgītā* was paraphrased in Bengali by more than half a dozen writers.

Of the numerous narrative poems on the Krishna legends only one is worth mention. Bhavānanda, who calls his poem *Harivaṃśa* (Dynasty of Hari) belonged to North-east Bengal. The work has retained much of the primitive flavour of the amorous theme, and is therefore affiliated with 'Baḍu' Caṇḍīdās's poem. Bhavānanda's poem is distinguished by lyric pieces that occasionally contain lines of real poetry. The author probably belonged to the earlier half of the century. The poem retained its popularity, until

recently, among the Muslims of Sylhet and its neighbourhood.

Writing of lyric songs was continued by Vaishnav poets with great gusto if not always with tolerable skill. The best of the poets aimed at achieving a purely musical effect by imitating the diction of Govindadās Kavirāj. The effect of this diction on the audience was heightened by the musical rhythm of the new Kīrttan style. Among the Vaishnav lyric song writers we find a few Muslims. Foremost among them were Saiyad Martuzā and Nāsīr Māmud. Apparently both had adopted the Vaishnav faith.

Anthologies of Vaishnav lyrics began to be compiled at first only as supplying illustration to the rhetorical doctrines of Rūpa Gosvāmīn. The earliest work of this sort is *Rādhākṛṣṇarasakalpavallī* (Wish-fulfilling Creeper of the Divine Love). Its author Rāmgopāldās (who signed often as Gopāldās) was himself a writer of lyric songs.

THE BEST poem (and the most popular in West Bengal) on the legends of Manasā is Ketakādās's *Manasāmaṅgal*. It was written sometime in the middle of the seventeenth century. Taking his cue from Mukundarām Cakravartī, Ketakādās (who called himself also as Kṣemānanda) opens his poem with an autobiographical introduction. It is briefly this:

The poet's father Śaṅkar Maṇḍal was in the employ of the local zamindar. When the latter died leaving three young sons Śaṅkar fell in the bad grace of the manager of the estate and had to move away with his family from his native village. They came to a village where he secured employment under another zamindar. One afternoon the mother asked Ketakādās and his younger brother Abhirām to get some fodder from the marshy field lying just outside the village. On their way to the field the boys had a clash with some other boys who were catching fish in a muddy pool. Ketakādās took away their catch and sent his brother back

home with it. When he reached the field there was nobody there and it was nearing sundown. He had scarcely begun to mow when a dust storm arose and he suddenly found a woman of the shoemaker (Mucī) caste standing just in front of him. The woman spoke to him and offered for sale a piece of fine cloth. Before the astounded young man could utter a syllable she tucked the cloth into her clothes. At the same time Ketakādās felt sharp pain in one foot and thinking it was an ant bite he looked down. When he looked up again he was shocked to find that the woman had vanished. His shock turned into terror at the next sight. It was a manifestation of the goddess (which the poet does not describe as he was forbidden to do so) with lots of serpents writhing and gliding. This was how Manasā revealed herself to Ketakādās. Before the goddess vanished she had commanded him to write her poem and sing it professionally. This, according to the poet, is the origin of his *Manasāmaṅgal.*

Ketakādās's poem closely follows the pattern of the story that was current in West Bengal. The style is simple and appealing to the masses without being vulgar or cheap. In spite of very little scope for freedom of characterization Ketakādās has shown some individuality.

The sobriquet 'Kṣemānanda' was used by a few other writers of *Manasāmaṅgal* poems from West Bengal. One of them was known only as Kṣemānanda. His is the smallest poem of the class, and the only two manuscripts known are in Nāgarī script and belonged to Manbhum. The style of the poem is simple and direct and the character of Cāndo is delineated boldly. It was written probably in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Viṣṇu Pāl, if the only known manuscript is faithful to the original, was a native of North-west Bengal and he wrote his *Manasāmaṅgal* in the dialect of that region. The poem retains some old features which are not noticeable anywhere except in Vipradās. The date of Viṣṇu Pāl may not be earlier than the middle of the seventeenth century.

THE *Dharmamaṅgal* poems belong exclusively to Rāḍha (i.e. the part of West Bengal bordered by the Gangā on the north and the east), and the poets (who were not all brahmans, some of them were Kāyasthas, and at least one each from such castes as Kaivarta, Suṁḍi, Vaidya and Beniyā) number about a couple of dozens. None of them can be assigned to the sixteenth century or earlier with any assurance.

So far as definite chronology is concerned Rūprām Cakravartī's poem is the oldest *Dharmamaṅgal* available to us in a couplet form. The poet was a native of South-west Bengal; his village Srīrāmpur was situated about six miles to the North-west of Dāmunyā the native village of Mukundarām Cakravartī. Following the footsteps of his illustrious countryman Rūprām began his poem with an autobiographical account, but he went much further. Like his predecessor, Rūprām had to leave his ancestral home but for an entirely different reason, and his migration was in an opposite direction, to the north across the Damodar. Rūprām's account of himself has a literary value. It gives some snapshots of lower middle class life in the mid-seventeenth century in South-west Bengal.

Rūprām was the second of the three sons of Śrīrām Cakravartī and Damayantī. He had two brothers, one elder (Ratneśvar) and the other younger (unnamed) and two younger sisters Sonā and Hīrā. The father was a reputed paṇḍit with a fairly large number of students. When the story opens Śrīrām had been dead for some time and the elder brother was the head of the family. For a reason suppressed by him but preserved in local tradition,[1] Rūprām was not pulling on well with his elder brother. When

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[1] According to the local tradition that was current in the locality up to some fifty years ago Rūprām had fallen in love with a very low caste ('Haḍī') girl. He was sent away from home to cure him of this infatuation. But the love had gone apparently too deep for such cure. The poet forsook his home and country but not his love. According to the tradition Rūprām finally married the girl and lost his caste. There is some support for this supposition from the text of his poem: the poet sometimes mentioned himself as 'Fakir'.

matters came to a head Rūprām was compelled to leave home and continue his studies elsewhere. The young fellow would take nothing from home except his books and writing tackle. One of his kindly neighbours gave him a change of cloth and some cash. He came to the village Āḍui. The best paṇḍit there was Raghurām Bhaṭṭācarya. The tired-looking, forlorn boy excited his pity. He accepted him as a pupil and gave him quarters in his own home. Rūprām claims that under the paṇḍit's teaching and guidance he soon finished the courses in vocabulary, grammar, poetry and prosody. One day when the paṇḍit was giving him a lesson in grammar Rūprām interrupted him frequently with some unnecessary questions. The paṇḍit at last lost his temper; he threw the book at the pupil's head and scolded him in these words:

> An entire day is wasted in teaching a word or two, and my other classes have to depend on this fellow's whims. In learning a few words he raises an endless controversy. At the time of teaching he creates unnecessary difficulties. I cannot keep you here any longer. Go home or elsewhere—to Navadvīp or Śāntipur. You may go to Kaṇāḍ (Bhaṭṭacārya) at Jaugrām, who has no rival even at Śāntipur.

At this sudden outburst of the meek teacher who would shed tears on Sītā's woes the pupil was thoroughly scared. He says:

> As the teacher was speaking his words were popping out like shots, and the pock-marks in his handsome face glowed as it were. As I heard these words my heart sank. My teacher was like the sun, very bright-looking. Who is there that can disobey the command of such a compelling teacher?

Rūprām made ready to start for Navadvīp immediately. When he had gone only a few hundred yards he suddenly thought of his mother and he at once turned to the path that

led to his village. Pushing ahead a few miles he came to a lonely and disused pathway and soon lost his bearings. After a time he realized that he was moving in a circle. To get his bearings right he looked up and saw a couple of brahmini ducks flying in a circle high overhead. When he looked down he saw a pair of tigers watching him quietly from a distance. The young man made a rush forward to escape from them but he slipped and fell down heavily on the brink of a tank. His books and writing tackle were thrown about. As he stood up he sensed that some one was collecting the things for him. Rūprām thus describes the person (no other than Dharma Himself):

> It was a Saturday and just noon time when Dharma stood before me ; a splendid garland was dangling from his neck. He was also wearing a wreath of Champak flowers ; he had a stout staff in his hand. In the guise of a brahman he stood in my path.

Dharma returned the books to the terrified young man, gave him his blessings in the form of some flowers and a neck-chain of bones[2] and then he told him to give up his studies and sing professionally his 'Twelve-day Song' (i.e. *Dharmamaṅgal*). Then the deity disappeared and the young man made a straight run for his home. When he came to the outskirts of Śrīrāmpur it was late afternoon. He drank his fill from a tank and sat down to rest. He would go home only after dark so that the elder brother might not know of his home-coming, and he could then quietly meet his mother. But that was not to be. His sisters were at the door and as they saw him they cried out in glee. Ratneśvar came out to enquire and saw Rūprām back home so soon. Then the poet says:

> Before I had so much as taken a seat in my home the

[2] Does this ('*hāḍer mālā*') signify the poet's connection with the Hāḍi girl?

> brother spoke using harsh words against me, and I could not meet my mother.
> My cruel brother barked: 'Yesterday you went away for study, and you dare return home today.' He flung away my books, the grammar and the dictionary; the commentaries too were thrown away. I collected my books once again; I thought I would go at once to Navadvīp, walking day and night. The two sisters Sonā and Hīrā were still at the door, but for the fear of the elder brother they could not go in and tell Mother that I had come.

Rūprām's trek northward began from the doorstep then and there. When he reached the Dāmodar he had been going without food for two days. A kind-hearted man gave him some paddy which he exchanged for some fried rice. He bathed in the river and began to say his prayers. Meanwhile a gust of wind blew away the fried rice. The poet says:

> Fried rice was blown away by the wind and I could drink only water; to carry my books and writing tackle I hardly had the strength.

Crossing over the river Rūprām jogged on until on the third day of starvation he reached a village where he had heard that a weaver family was holding a ceremonial feast. To quote the poet:

> I suffered from the hands of fate, and I was a man easily affected. I wanted to approach the weaver family for a brahman's fee. I hastened and made my appearance there. My heart was delighted at the sight of the arrangements for a dinner of flattened rice and sour curd.[3]

The famished young man had his fill but he missed fried paddy.[4] He also received some cowries as a brahman guest's

[3] These were some of the main items of a feast given to a brahman by a non-brahman.

[4] A non-brahman would not normally serve fried paddy to a brahman guest.

fee. Next day he came to the village Eḍāl where lived Gaṇeś Rāy the brahman chief of the locality. Gaṇeś Rāy welcomed Rūprām and made all arrangements for him to stay and write his poem. When it was completed the chief made all arrangements for the performance of the ritual song of Dharma.

Rūprām mentions that when he completed his poem Shuja was the subedar at Rajmahal. Then he mentions the year (1571 Śaka=1649) in a chronogram presented in the form of a stiff puzzle.

The popularity of Rūprām's poem in West Bengal was unprecedented. It superseded the earlier poems of the *genre* and is not excelled by any such poem written subsequently. Its popularity is indicated by the numerous manuscripts that have come down to us. It presents the story in a simple and uninvolved form. There is no attempt at pedantry and bookish verbosity.

SEVERAL local folk-cults hitherto confined to outlying regions were now claiming attention. The person who took up the task of elevating the folk-tales and songs connected with these cults into the class of 'Maṅgal' poetry was a Kāyastha, Kṛṣṇarāmdās by name. He lived in a village about four miles to the north of Calcutta. His first work *Kālikāmaṅgal*, really a version of the story of Vidyā and Sundar, was written in 1676 when he was twenty years of age. The second poem *Ṣaṣṭhīmaṅgal* was written three years later (1679). It is a small work seeking to establish the worship of Ṣaṣṭhī, the deity of child welfare. The story, based on a folk-tale, is briefly this:

The goddess Ṣaṣṭhī was out to propagate her worship on the earth. The story begins with her arrival in Sātgaon on the Gaṅgā. She saw that the town was rich and populated. In the form of a very old brahman woman and accompanied by her lady-in-waiting Nilā, she betook herself to the inner

apartments of the king. The queen received her politely. The goddess told the queen that she was coming from Burdwan for a ceremonial bath in the Gangā and that she would like to worship Ṣaṣṭhī then and there. The queen was curious to know the efficacy of the worship of Ṣaṣṭhī. The old lady told her the following story.

The wife of a merchant had received blessings from Ṣaṣṭhī and possessed seven sons who were all grown up and married. Her youngest daughter-in-law was carrying when one day she ate the food to be offered to the goddess, and let it to be known that a black cat had eaten it. From that time her issues were all stolen from the lying-in room by a black cat. On the seventh occasion she went to the woods and was delivered of a child. Soon a black cat appeared from nowhere and took away the baby. She gave chase but could not catch the cat. She sat on the wayside and wept. The goddess then appeared before her and returned her lost children. The woman came home and worshipped the goddess with devotion.

On hearing this tale from the old lady the queen became a willing devotee of Ṣaṣṭhī.

Kṛṣṇarām's third poem *Rāymaṅgal* was written in 1786. It celebrates the greatness of the two local deities of the Sundarbans, Dakṣin Rāy (Lord of the South) of the Hindus and Baḍa-Khān Gāzi (Big Khan the Ghazi) of the Muslims. The story incidentally records the conflict between the two and subsequent peace and amity brought about by the Supreme Being. Kṛṣṇarām was not the first to write a *Rāymaṅgal* poem as he mentions a predecessor Mādhav Ācārya whose work has not survived. Neither was Kṛṣṇarām the last writer of such poetry.

As is usual with most of the seventeenth and eighteenth century writers of 'Maṅgal' poetry, Kṛṣṇarām begins with the history of the genesis of his poem. On a Monday in the month of Bhādra (August-September) the poet was a guest of a man of the cowherd caste in a village some miles to the

south of his native place. His sleeping accommodation was made in a corner of the grain shed. At night he had a dream. A person riding on a tiger and carrying a bow and arrows in his hands approached him and introduced himself as the Lord of the South. He commanded Kṛṣṇarām to write a poem proclaiming his greatness, and he gave the following assurance:

> If anybody fails to signify appreciation of your poem I shall send tigers to eat up his whole family.

The story is as follows:

A childless king was advised by a sage to worship Śiva for a son. He did so and Dakṣin Rāy was born to him. After he succeeded his father, Dakṣin Rāy reclaimed some of the wild areas of the Sundarbans and founded a new kingdom there. On his death, Dakṣin Rāy became the presiding deity of the southern land (i.e. the Sundarbans). He obtained his first worship at Pāṭan. He sent his friend Kālu Rāy (Black Prince) to Hijli to quell king Narasiṃha, who admitted the divinity of Dakṣin Rāy only when his dead son was brought back to life. Then comes the story of the merchant Devadatta and his son Puṣpadatta, which forms the main theme of the main part of Kṛṣṇarām's poem.

Devadatta of Baḍadaha (now Barda in Midnapore) had gone on a trading voyage to the city of Turaṅga where he incurred the displeasure of the king and was thrown into prison for life. After a few years' waiting Puṣpadatta wanted to set out in search of his father. He asked the wood-cutter Ratāi to get wood for building boats. Accompanied by his son and six brothers Ratāi went to the forest. They unknowingly cut down a tree which was sacred to the Lord of the South who at once sent his tigers to kill Ratāi's brothers. When Ratāi was about to commit suicide in grief the deity appeared and told him to offer his son as sacrifice. He did as he was told. The god was pleased and all the seven were made alive. Wood was fetched and the boats were

built. Puṣpadatta started on his mission down the Gangā. When his boats were passing by the places where Baḍa-Khān Gāzi and Dakṣin Rāy had their sacred places receiving worship from all going that way, the young merchant was curious to know why the former was represented by an earthen mound and the latter by a head cut off from the body. The captain of the boats replied that once there was a mortal conflict between the two. It ended only when the Supreme Being intervened.

Puṣpadatta was intrigued. On his request the sailor narrated the following story of the conflict between the Gāzi and Rāy.

Once upon a time a merchant named Dhanapati was sailing to Pāṭan with a heavy cargo of merchandize. When he was passing by the sacred places he paid his homage only to Dakṣin Rāy and ignored the Gāzi altogether. The fakir devotees of the Gāzi approached the merchant and told him not to neglect the worship due to the deity. Dhanapati would not listen to them and had them driven out from his presence. The fakirs complained to the Gāzi that a Bengali bully did not care for him and had treated his servants roughly. The anger of the Gāzi fell on Dakṣin Rāy; he ordered his men to pull down and sack the place belonging to Rāy. Rāy was then living with his family at Khāḍi. A Bania named Baṭe came to him with the news. Rāy was furious. Hostilities commenced at once with tiger armies on each side. There were wins and losses on both sides. Finally the Supreme Being appeared before them in this guise of compromise:

> One half of his head wore a *qula,* the other half showed a turban with a peacock feather; a garland of flowers and a rosary of beads (dangled from his neck). His skin was partly fair and partly as dark as black cloud; the *Korān* and the *Purāṇa* were held in his two hands.

The two deities now became fast friends for ever.

Puṣpadatta paid his homage to both the deities and proceeded on his voyage. The story then closely follows the well-known pattern of the Dhanapati-Śrīpati episode of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal.*

Kṛṣṇarām's next work, *Śītalāmaṅgal* was written as a sequel of *Rāymaṅgal.* The story follows the pattern of *Ṣaṣṭhīmaṅgal.* Vasant Rāy, the son and factotum of Śītalā (the goddess of pox and other diseases), was out on horseback to propagate the worship of the goddess and arrived first at Sātgaon. He then became a Vaishnav tradesman and with his string of pack bullocks approached the toll collector Madan Dās, a Kāyastha. To the latter he said that he was coming from Burdwan with commodities for sale. Taking him to be a meek Vaishnav fellow Madan ordered his Rajput peons and guards to seize the goods of Vasant Rāy. The things were all food stuff, and Madan and his men soon made short work of them. In reality the commodities were the various diseases that formed the retinue of Vasant Rāy and Śītalā. The result was that Madan and his men got those diseases in galore. The Vaishnav merchant had to be propitiated now. Madan made a vow that he would never again collect tolls from a Vaishnav. Vasant Rāy then revealed his own identity and told him to worship him as a deity so that he (Madan) would enjoy continued prosperity. The grateful Madan Dās built a beautiful temple on the bank of the Gangā and therein installed the images of Vasant Rāy and Śītalā. The next episode, Vasant Rāy's conquest of a Kazi, is preserved only fragmentarily.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century quite a number of poets, all belonging to South-west Rāḍha, wrote *Śītalāmaṅgal* poems of various sizes. One of them was Māṇikrām Gāṅgulī, the author of a *Dharmamaṅgal* poem. The biggest work of the *genre* was written by Nityānanda Cakravartī who belonged to South-east Midnapore where it enjoyed high popularity.

The fifth and last poem by Kṛṣṇarāmdās is *Lakṣmī-maṅgal.* The story is based on a folk-tale moulded at the end in the usual pattern of the narrative (Maṅgal) poetry. Two friends from Gauḍ were out to see the world and seek their fortune. They were passing through the wild tract of Orissa on their way to Kāñcīpur. One of them was Vallabh, a bania, favoured by Lakṣmī (the goddess of fortune) and the other was his friend Janārdan, a brahman. Vallabh trotted on horseback and Janārdan trudged behind him. To test her protégé's courage and devotion the goddess sent her companion to them in the form of a tiger. The brahman swooned away on sighting the beast, but the merchant bravely faced the tiger and mentally sought the protection of Lakṣmī. The tiger disappeared, and Vallabh helped his friend to regain consciousness. A few yards ahead they came to a lake. The two friends drank the water of the lake but when the horse was about to drink a huge serpent came out of the lake and devoured it and disappeared into the lake. At the loss of the animal Vallabh was overcome with grief and he wanted to throw himself into the water. Janārdan consoled him and advised him to pray to Lakṣmī. The goddess then appeared before them as a very old brahman lady. She was holding a small bird in a cage. Finding the two young men in a despondent mood she said: 'Tell me what ails you. I am a brahman's daughter and I know the occult ways and means.' On being told of the loss of their horse she released the bird from the cage. The bird dived into the lake and came up with the serpent in its beak. The belly of the serpent was ripped open, and the remains of all the animals devoured came out alive. The goddess gave Vallabh a lotus flower which she wore as an ear ornament and told him to put it on his head at any time of distress or emergency. She disappeared and the two friends made a move onward. As soon as their back was turned the serpent was made whole and it went back into the lake.

Soon the friends came to a rich but entirely deserted

city. Janārdan would have passed it by but Vallabh felt curious. They came to the palace and passed through three halls. In the fourth hall they saw a giantess seated on the royal throne. They bowed down before her and told her their story. She offered them hospitality. Janārdan was for immediate departure from the place, but Vallabh reminded him of Lakṣmī's help. They passed the night quietly. On the morning before going out for feed the giantess had hinted to her protégé, the princess of the land and the only surviving human, that Janārdan would be a good husband to her. The princess and Janārdan met in the garden and instantly fell in love. The princess told him that she was Ratnamālā the daughter of king Vīrasiṃha who had suffered the curse of a sage that he and his people would be devoured by a demoness.

They soon became husband and wife, which the giantess approved silently. On the next day the friends left the place and the giantess requested them to visit her on the return journey. Pushing on they came to the sea coast. Finding their way blocked thus they prayed to Lakṣmī who made a way for them through the sea. On one side was the open sea and on the other Kamalādaha (Lake of Lakṣmī). Seated on the back of the horse the two friends jogged on. Suddenly they saw in Kamalādaha a wondrous sight. On the surface of the water there was a green patch of rich paddy-field and in it there was a big blooming lotus on which was seated a beautiful girl wearing as ornaments the various species of paddy sheafs. After a time they reached their destination Kāñcīpur. The police chief met them as they were sight-seeing, and receiving scant attention from them he had them arrested as spies and brought before the king. The king wanted to know who they were. Vallabh, as ill luck would have it, narrated their adventures in full. The king wanted to see the wondrous sight for himself and test their veracity. This they could not do. Vallabh was taken to the execution ground. At the last moment however he remembered the

words of the goddess. He touched the flower given by the goddess on his head and instantly the goddess appeared in her disguise of an old brahman lady carrying a small bird in a cage. When she could not get Vallabh released by request and begging she released the bird. The bird put terror into the heart of the king. Vallabh was released and was married to the daughter of the king. The goddess then showed to the king the wondrous sight of herself as the paddy goddess. After some time Janārdan, Vallabh and his wife started for home. This time the journey was by sea. They disembarked at the sea coast and took the trek through the wild region. They came to the palace of the giantess who received them heartily. She formally handed over her fosterchild to Janārdan. Then the demoness called the girl and said these words:

> 'I have cared for you to the best of my ability. You too have been constant in my service. And you did not think of the fate of your parents. I have married you to a brahman. Go to your own home. Do you look after your husband with loving care and do you try to forget my offences and shortcomings ; and do not speak ill of me. You are a lucky girl.' As she was saying this tears ran down her cheeks, she embraced the girl and was overcome with emotion.

They bowed down at the feet of the demoness and started on their homeward journey. The demoness left the palace for good and went away to practise penance. The two friends and their wives returned home safely. Lakshmī was worshipped in pomp. In course of time a son was born to Vallabh. The story ends here.

The attempts of Kṛṣṇarāmdās and other writers of the century were not successful in the sense that these new 'Maṅgal' poems did not catch the fancy of the people. The days of the narrative cult poetry were passing. The old gods and goddesses no doubt continued to be worshipped as before

but the Vaishnav influence was becoming all-embracing and Vaishnav songs guided the taste of the literary-minded. The poems on local cults or regional deities therefore were accepted only as items in the particular rituals.

One other contribution by Kṛṣṇarām should be mentioned. He was the first Bengali writer to use Hindustani to any extent. His Gāzi speaks excellent, though extremely vulgar, Hindustani.

13

THE ARRAKAN POETS AND THE LATER MUSLIM WRITERS

A CLOSE cultural contact between Bengal and Arrakan, the neighbouring province of lower Burma speaking a Tibeto-Burman language, was first made early in the fifteenth century when Narameikhla, the king of Arrakan, dispossessed by the king of Burma, came to Bengal and took refuge in the court of Gauḍ (1404). After a sojourn of many years he was helped by Jalāluddīn the sultan of Bengal to regain his throne (1430). We can reasonably assume that the king had acquired a liking for Bengali poetry and music among other things during his stay in Bengal and introduced them in his own country after he returned home and to power. But there is no evidence to show how far this engrafting of Bengali culture in the Arrakan court was successful and continuous, in spite of the fact that Arrakan continued to be dominated politically by Bengal and its external affairs were controlled by the Bengal governors in Chittagong. The position was however reversed for some years at least in the third quarter of the century when the Arrakan power annexed Chittagong and kept it under its control until, in the first decade of the sixteenth century, it was recovered by Nusrat Shāh, a general of Husain Shāh. During the years Chittagong was in occupation by the Arrakanese a very close cultural contact between Bengal (and the rest of India) and Arrakan was established. From this time Bengali was accepted at the Arrakan court as the chief cultural language, mainly because many of the high officials of Arrakan came from Chittagong and the other neighbouring territories whose mother-tongue was Bengali.

After the overthrow of the dynasty of Husain Shāh, Arrakan seems to have regained its full political independence. But the influence of the Bengali language did not suffer; on the contrary it grew. The kings of Arrakan

henceforth adopted a Bengali form of their names, and sometimes it was, as in the case of Thiri Thu Dhamma (Arrakanese pronunciation of 'Śrīsudharmā'), the only name known to us. The Bengali immigrants or sojourners in Arrakan were mostly Muslims; often too the officials and ministers were Bengali Muslims. Muslim influence in the Arrakan court was therefore far from negligible, and as happened quite often in the seventeenth century, the kings took Muslim names as well. The literary tradition which Parāgal Khān and his son Nusrat Khān had started in South-east Bengal reached the court of Arrakan by the end of the sixteenth century.

The people of Arrakan and their rulers had for their mother-tongue, Arrakanese, a Tibeto-Chinese speech closely connected to Burmese, which latter was outside the pale of Aryandom. But from the middle of the fifteenth century the culture of Bengal began to percolate into Arrakan not only through the officials but also through merchants and adventurers who came across the sea or the hill tracts to seek their fortunes. In about a century the court of Arrakan had accepted some of the manners and customs of the Bengali court. Bengali poetry and Bengali dance and music became highly popular in the cultured section of Arrakan society.

So far as we know, the first Bengali poet to write under the ægis of the Arrakan court was Daulat Kāzi. His patron Āshraf Khān was a commanding officer of king Śrīsudharmā (Thiri Thu Dhamma) who ruled between 1622 and 1638. Āshraf was a Sūfi and so presumably was Daulat Kāzi. To popularize the romantic tales current in West Indian poetry (Rajasthani, Gujarati, Hindi, Avadhi and Bhojpuri), Āshraf had asked Daulat to render the story of Lor, Candrāṇī and Mayanā into Bengali narrative poetry ('Pāñcāli'). The story had been adopted in folk-song and dance, and the mention of 'Lorik Dance' in an early fourteenth century Maithil work indicates that it was a popular

amusement in North Bihar in the fourteenth century. The Lorik song is now popular in South Bihar (where the story has assumed the form of a saga), especially among the Ahirs. But the story of Lorik as now current in South is not its original form. The story was probably not very well known in Bengal. Daulat Kāzi took it from the old Rajasthani poem by Sādhan, manuscripts of which have come to light recently. Daulat Kāzi died before he could finish his poem. It was completed years later by Ālāol (1659), another Bengali poet from Arrakan. The poem has a double title, *Satī Mayanā* and *Lor-Candrāṇī*. The story is as follows:

Lor[1], the ruler of Gohāri[2], was married happily to Mayanā (or Mayanāmatī). After a time a yogi mendicant came to Lor and showed him the potrait of Candrāṇī the beautiful princess of Moharā[3]. Candrāṇī had been married to a warrior who unfortunately was a midget. The marriage was therefore not happy. Lor was tempted to seek the love of the princess. He went to Moharā and managed to meet Candrāṇī. She reciprocated Lor's feeling and the lovers were united. Candrāṇī's husband who had been away now returned home and the couple had to flee the country. The husband gave chase. The two warriors met in a forest. A duel ensued which resulted in the death of Candrāṇī's husband. Candrāṇī's father now accepted Lor as his son-in-law and made over the kingdom to him. Here ends the first part of the story (*Lor-Candrāṇī*).

The scene now shifts to Lor's home where his neglected wife was pining for him. The lady's only solace was her devotion to Durgā who alone could bring back her husband. Meanwhile a rich young fellow named Chātan had fallen for Mayanā and engaged a woman to seduce her. The woman came to Mayanā and introduced herself as her old

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[1] Literally, a young man (Hindi 'laundā').
[2] Literally, a rustic region (Hindi 'gaoāri').
[3] Literally, (the land of) enchantment (*mohakara*).

nurse. She was a clever woman and her words of commiseration persuaded Mayanā of her sincerity. But when she proposed a *liaison* with Chātan, Mayanā became furious. The woman was thrown out with ignominy. When Mayanā was at the end of her tether she sent a trusted brahman, carrying her pet parrot, in search of her husband. He travelled through many lands and at last came to Moharā. When Lor met him he at once remembered his forgotten wife and was all remorse. Placing his son on the throne of Moharā he with Candrāṇī returned home to Mayanā. This is the second part of the story (*Satī Mayanā*).

Daulat Kāzi was a good poet; he was thoroughly acquainted with the contemporary poet's craft. His acquaintance with Sanskrit poetry was not superficial. He has drawn similies from Kālidāsa and some metrical patterns from Jayadeva. His indebtedness to Vaishnav poetry is evident.

The following lyric is from a 'Bārmāsiyā' song describing the procuress's version of Mayanā's suffering for the absence of her husband during the month of Śrāvaṇ (July-August):

> O Mayanā, the month of Śrāvaṇ brings much pleasure; the soft, steady drizzling excites passionate love. On the earth flow streams of water; the night is black, and a lover is engaged with his beloved in love's sports.
> The sky is dark; the fields and meadows are green; the ten quarters are dark and the daylight is dim and and soft. The lightning dallies with the cloud lover; the night is full of darkness and terror (outside) but (this is the occasion for) enjoying the various sports of love.
> The season is very seasonable in Śrāvaṇ, but how can I pass the time when Hari is not with me[4]. The rivers are torrential; the wind blows sharp. This kindles four-fold the fire of unrequited passion.

[4] This is obviously an echo from Vaishnav songs.

You are a king's daughter, yet you let yourself suffer for life. What is the good of still thinking yourself as Lor's wife?
(The poet says:) You should know that the love of the true-hearted is a garland that never fades. The chief of the commanders, the General (i.e. Āshraf Khān), is glorious in the world (and he knows this).

ĀLĀOL, another Sūfi poet succeeding Daulat Kāzi in the court of Arrakan, was also a good scholar. His knowledge of Persian poetry was deep, and of Sanskrit lore adequate. He was well versed in music too. But as a writer Ālāol shows less facility and ingenuity than his predecessor. He was more religiously minded and the religious strain in his writings often dominated his fancy to the detriment of his poetry.

Ālāol's life was never smooth. He was the son of Majlis Kutub, governor of a Lower Bengal region. While the father and son were once making a journey by boat they were attacked by Portuguese pirates. There was a fight, the father was killed and the son was captured and sold as an army recruit in Arrakan. Ālāol was taken in the cavalry. In a short time the young soldier's reputation as a scholar and master of music spread around and reached the ears of Sulaimān, a minister of king Śrīcandra Sudharmā (reigned 1652-1684), who at once took to the young man. It was at the request of Sulaimān that Ālāol wrote (1659) the sequel to the unfinished poem of Daulat Kāzi and translated (1663) the religious treatise *Tuhfa* from Persian.

Māgan Thākur[5] the foster-son of the sister of Śrīcandra Sudharmā and co-regent of Arrakan, became a fast friend of Ālāol. Two of his poems including his best work (*Padmāvatī*) were written at the instance of Māgan. Māgan was

[5] The name Māgan (literally 'obtained by begging') indicates that he came from a Bengali-speaking family.

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inclined towards Sūfiism and as such was an admirer of Jaisi's poetry. He requested Ālāol to render Jaisi's *Padmāvatī* into Bengali verse so that it might be readily appreciated by the men of Arrakan. Ālāol's translation is neither entire nor wholly faithful. He abridged and revised the story to suit the pattern of a Bengali narrative poem ('Pāñcāli') and also added some extraneous episodes and stories. The story of Ālāol's *Padamāvatī* is briefly as follows:

Nāgasen was the king of Chitor. His wife was Nāgamatī. The king came to hear of the extraordinary beauty of Padmāvatī the daughter of the king of Ceylon and desired very much to marry her. Dressed as a yogi Nāgasen went to Ceylon, and by showing his prowess and skill won the hand of the princess. When the couple were returning home their boat foundered in the high sea but they were saved by the god of ocean. The king came back home and lived happily with his two wives. But he was not destined to enjoy peace for long. Nāgasen's courtiers became jealous of the favours which the king bestowed on Rāghavcetan, a Tantric scholar with occult powers. They contrived to have Rāghavcetan disgraced before the king and had him banished from the kingdom. Padmāvatī tried to appease the paṇḍit before his banishment by offering him a bangle from her wrist. Rāghavcetan went to Delhi and showed the bangle to Sultān Ālāuddīn and extolled the rivishing looks of Padmāvatī. The sultan desired to possess her. He sent a messenger to Chitor to fetch Padmāvatī. On being refused Ālāuddīn attacked Chitor. Nāgasen was defeated and taken a captive to Delhi, but Gorā and Bādilā (or Bādal), two of the most loyal followers of Nāgasen, managed to get back the king to Chitor.

While the king was away from Chitor Deopāl the king of Kumbhalaner attempted to seduce Padmāvatī. When Nāgasen came back and heard of this he challenged Deopāl to a duel. Deopāl was killed outright and Nāgasen was mortally wounded. Nāgamatī and Padmāvatī died suttees

and were cremated in the same pyre with their husband. The pyre was still asmoke when Ālāuddīn and his army entered Chitor. On hearing the noble and tragic end of the royal family the sultan paid his homage before the pyre and returned to Delhi.

Ālāol adapted in Bengali verse the story of the Persian romance, *Saiful-mulk badiuj-jamāl* at the instance of Māgan Ṭhākur. The work was interrupted when Māgan died and it was resumed and completed years later at the request of Saiyad Muhammad Musā who took Ālāol under his patronage after prince Māgan's death. At Musā's request he also rendered *Haft Paikar* of Nizāmi into Bengali verse. At that time Shāh Shuja, son of Shāhjehan and subedar of Bengal, had taken refuge at the Arrakan court. Shuja met Ālāol and the two exiles were mutually attracted. After Shuja had been assassinated Ālāol came under suspicion and was thrown into prison and his belongings were confiscated. When he was released after some years he was a broken man. Saiyad Musā and Majlis Navarāj, both ministers of Śrīcandra Sudharmā took care of him. At the request of the Majlis Ālāol wrote *Dārā-sikandar-nāmā,* a Bengali adaptation of Nizāmi's *Iskandar-nāmah.*

Ālāol appears to be the first Bengali writer to translate Persian poetry. His good knowledge of several languages, e.g. Sanskrit, Bengali, Avadhi and Persian, distinguished his style. His poetic fancy was not always as original as that of Daulat Kāzi, but his achievement was more solid. The following song from *Padmāvatī* illustrates the poet's allegiance to the contemporary form of vernacular lyric poetry:

> Ah! my heart breaks. Awake or dreaming I always see him unique. I know not how fate has decreed for me: I obtained the touchstone but have lost it out of carelessness. To whom can I reveal the burning of my heart? My sympathetic friends would be heart-broken to think of it. In sorrow my days and nights drag on

like ages. How can I live like a fish out of water? Why does my insufferable life stick to the body? My heart is as hard as stone as it does not break under such stress. Lord Saiyad Musā is adept in wisdom. The pangs of love's separation are sung by the humble Ālāol.

MUSLIM writers were not impervious to the influence of the religious poetry of the Hindus. Their first attempts at writing religious narrative poems for their brothers in faith frankly imitated the narrative poems of Hindu authors. Such poems, dealing with the stories of Muhammad and the earlier prophets were entitled *Nabivaṃśa* (after the Hindu *Harivaṃśa*) or *Rasulvijay* (after the Hindu *Pāṇḍav-vijay*). The older Muslim writers of such poems belonged to Chittagong and Sylhet as these two places were the best centres of Muslim literary culture in East Bengal from the sixteenth century.

Saiyad Sultān of Chittagong wrote his *Rasulvijay* (also called *Nabivaṃśa*) in 1654, and he included some Hindu gods and avatars among the prophets. He had also written treatises on Yoga and some 'Vaishnava' songs. The Bengali Muslims had their own *Mahābhārata* in the *Jaṅg-nāmā* (Battle Stories) poems which described either the conquest and conversion of Iran by the followers of the prophet or narrated the cruel fate of the brothers Hāsan and Husain, the grandsons of the prophet. The latter story being as tragic as that of Abhimanyu in the *Mahābhārata* became very popular among the Shia Muslims of Bengal. The oldest *Jaṅgnāmā* poem in Bengali is *Matulhosen* (Death of Husain) by Mohamad Khān of Chittagong. It was written at the instance of the poet's spiritual master (*murshid*) Pīr Shāh Sultān and completed in 1645. Among the other writers of *Jaṅgnāmā* poems from Chittagong mention may be made of Nasarullāh Khān who wrote his poem towards

the beginning of the eighteenth century at the command of his *murshid* Pīr Hāmiduddīn, and of Mansūr who wrote at the instance of Muhammad Shāh.

The earliest known Muslim poet of North Bengal was Hāyāt Māmud whose *Jaṅgnāmā* is called also *Maharam-parva* (after the books of the *Mahābhārata*). It was written in 1723. His other works include a Bengali adaptation of a Persian version of *Hitopadeśa* written in 1732, an Islamic theological treatise *Hitajñānvāṇī* (Words of Good Knowledge) written in 1753, and *Āmbiyāvāṇī* (Voice of the Prophets) written in 1758.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century a literary and cultural centre of the West Bengal Muslims was established in the Bhursuṭ (ancient Bhūriśreṣṭhi) region on the lower reaches of the Damodar. The mid-eighteenth century poet Bhāratcandra Rāy belonged to this region and his highly Persianized style of poetry reflects the influence of the style of the popular Muslim writers of that locality. The most notable of these local writers was Garībullāh who in all probability belonged to the early part of the eighteenth century. Two poems of Garībullāh have come down to us. One is the version of *Jaṅgnāmā* of *Āmīr Hāmzā* and the other is *Yusūf-Zulekhā* based on the Persian poem of Nuruddīn Jāmi. Garībullāh was followed by Saiyad Hāmzā who completed his predecessor's *Jaṅgnāmā* by writing the second part (1792-94). Before that he had written *Madhu-mālatī,* a romantic poem based on a popular folk-tale. Hāmzā's third poem, printed under the title *Jaiguner Puthi* (Book of Zaigun), is the *Jaṅgnāmā* of Hānifā, completed in October 1797. His last work is *Hātem-Tāir-Kissā* (Stories of Hātim Tayyi). This poem was completed in 1804.

The early nineteenth century Muslim writers of this region are not worth mention here. They wrote mainly for the consumption of the illiterate people residing in Calcutta, and they drew largely from Persian, Hindi and Urdu popular romances. Their language was so much saturated with

Perso-Arabic and Hindi words that it was often unintelligible to persons not acquainted with those tongues. This jargon was known as Muslim Bengali. It was a creation by the West Bengal Muslim writers and was taken up by their North and East Bengal brethren only towards the close of the nineteenth century.

Muslims Bengali poetry does not appear to have been cultivated exclusively by Muslims. Sometimes a Hindu writer was commissioned to write on an Islamic theme. A good instance is the *Jaṅgnāmā* by Rādhācaran Gop who belonged to North-west Bengal.

The influence of Hindu poetry on the Muslim writers was increasing so that by the beginning of the nineteenth century we find several Islamic themes recast in the Hindu mould. The very much popular story of the boyhood sportiveness of the brothers Hāsan and Husain was a frank imitation of the similar exploits of Kṛṣṇa and Balarām narrated in the *Kṛṣṇamaṅgal* poems. The story of Hariś-candra (in *Dharmamaṅgal*) and of Karṇa the Charitable (*dāta*) (in the eighteenth century *Kṛṣṇamaṅgal* poetry) had its Muslim version in *Islām Nabi Kecchā* of Abdul Matin of Burdwan. The latter part of the story of *Surajjamāl* by Ābdul Rahman of Faridpur imitates the story of Behulā as in the *Manasāmaṅgal* poems.

The Muslim settlement of Sylhet remained more or less in cultural isolation. They had never lost contact with their west-country co-religionists. They cultivated Hindi poetry and had kept up the use of Kāyathi script among themselves. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century books were printed in this script which was known as the Sylhet Nagari. The Muslim poets of Sylhet preferred writing purely romantic narratives as well as 'Vaishnav' lyrics and mystic songs.

THE traditional stories of the local Muslim saints ('Pīr')

were woven with romantic tales to form a new type of religious poetry in West and North Bengal and were responsible for the emergence of a new deity called Satyanārāyaṇ (i.e. Haq the Nārāyaṇa) by the Hindus and Satya Pīr (i.e. Haq the Pīr) by the Muslims. The writers of such poems (*Satyapīr Pāñcāli*) were mostly Hindus. The earliest traditions regarding the Muslim Pīrs in Bengal are recorded in *Sekaśubhodayā* (*circa* 1550) written in a hybrid language which is as much Sanskrit as Bengali. It contains stories of the spiritual powers of Sheikh Jalāluddīn who, as the book says, came to Bengal during the reign of Laksmaṇasen. Some of the stories and anectodes are very old. One story that is not known elsewhere says that a woman was so much enrapt by a melody that she mistook her infant son for her pitcher and dropped him down a well where she had come to fetch water. The story is illustrated in a terra cotta plaque from the ruins of the eighth century temple at Mahasthan. *Sekaśubhodayā* has obviously utilized material from an earlier work of the same type.

At any rate the tradition of the Pīrs in Bengal has its origin in the thirteenth century. A few writers took up folk-takes to illustrate the might of Satya Pīr. A North Bengal writer, Kṛṣṇaharidās, who wrote the biggest poem of the *genre* at the instance of a Muslim landlord, exploited local traditional lore. But the majority of them wrote very small poems using the same story that was obviously modelled after the merchant episodes of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* and *Manasāmaṅgal* poetry. As literary products this Pīr poetry is totally valueless, except that it bears evidence of a widespread attempt at a *rapprochement* between the two major faiths. The new-fangled deity Satya-Pīr or Satya-Nārāyaṇ achieved high popularity in the eighteenth century and we find the best writers of the century, Ghanarām Kaviratna, Rāmeśvar Bhaṭṭācarya and Bhāratcandra Rāy writing short *Satyanārāyaṇ-Pāñcali* poems.

14

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: ITS TENDENCIES AND EFFECTS

THE fabric of the far-flung Mughal Empire which was giving way under the stress of the military policy of Aurangzeb snapped in no time after the death of the emperor (1706) and Bengal became almost an independent unit under the régime of the provincial governors popularly known as the Nabobs. In the mean time the interest of the foreign powers engaged in trade was gradually becoming keener in the economic and political life in the lower Gangetic region which was the nerve centre of the province. These two factors, weakening of the hold of Delhi and the establishment of the foreign mercantile houses along the Hooghly, combined to lay the foundations of a new city culture which had been unknown in Bengal. The Mughal administration had set up zamindar houses that imitated the manners and customs of the semi-independent ruling houses of the earlier days and extended a half-hearted patronage to poets and scholars more as a matter of form than preference. The best known writers of the century (other than Vaishnav) enjoyed such patronage. Ghanarām's patron was Kīrtticandra of Burdwan, Rāmeśvar wrote under direction from Rājārām Singh of Midnapore and Bhāratcandra was a protége of Kṛṣṇacandra Rāy of Krishnagar.

In the latter half of the century when the British power was established Calcutta became the centre of administration, commerce and culture. Commercial and administrative connection with the British was exceedingly profitable to some Bengalis who were settled in or near Calcutta. Some of these *nouveaux riche* came forward as supporters of the new semi-literary and cultural trends that emerged in Calcutta and the other townships along the Hooghly, starting from Murshidabad.

One of the main literary tendencies that was gathering

force from the beginning of the century was the formation of a prose style. Little headway could however be made in this direction till the beginning of the next century when Bengali printing became well established and the necessity of practical and literary prose began to be very seriously felt. It was the Vaishnavs of the earlier century who had attempted a kind of prose in some of their esoteric and catechismal treatises. But theirs was a kind of syncopated and minced diction resembling the *Sūtra* style of Sanskrit and lying midway between poetry and prose. The Portuguese missionaries and their Catholic converts in Bengal took up the cue from the Vaishnav treatises and wrote catechisms in Bengali prose.

This was real prose but the style was not smooth and the diction was full of foreign idioms and expressions. The influence of the dialect of East Bengal, which was the main sphere of activity of Catholic Christianity in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries, is strongly noticeable. The best specimen of this early Christian prose is available to us in the treatise by Dom Antonio, a native Christian from Dacca. The work, which was never printed, is in the form of a dialogue between a brahman and a Roman Catholic priest, the latter seeking to establish the superiority of Christianity over Hinduism. The other important work of this type is *Xrepar Xaxtrer Orth, bhed*[1] by Manoel da Assumpsam who wrote it in Dacca in 1734, and printed it nine years later in Roman type in Lisbon together with the Portuguese Original *Cathecismo da Doutrina Christao*. In the same year (1743) was published his Bengali Grammar in Portuguese with a Bengali-Portuguese Vocabulary. The habit of verse writing in Bengali however was so strong that even these Christian writers could not help occasional lapses into versification and adding distichs at the end of their treatises.

[1] It means 'The Meaning and Implication of the Scripture of Mercy'.

Persian was the official language of the Mughal administration and so it had to be learnt even by a brahman if he had an ambition to do well in life. As a consequence less and less attention was given to Sanskrit, and so it came about that by the middle of the eighteenth century even Sanskrit pundits and learned Vaidyas (i.e. native physicians) would find it more convenient to have their handbooks in Bengali translation rather than in the Sanskrit originals. Thus came into existence the priest's handbook, the pundit's elementary book of logic and the physician's *vade mecum,* all in abridged form and in Bengali prose. It was this style of the pundits that reappeared in the early nineteenth century prose of the Fort William College teachers and of Rāmmohan Ray, to be polished and standardized later by the efforts of Iśwarcandra Vidyāsāgar and his contemporaries. The popular prose style which appears in epislotary communication and in documents differed from the pundit's style in having less of unfamiliar dictionary words and more of popular Perso-Arabic words and phrases, and it cannot be denied that the popular style was the living style as it was closer to everyday speech than was the pundit's diction. The popular style was cultivated by Kāyasthas as it was they who took to Persian learning more than any other caste or group. Rāmrām Vasu, the venacular teacher of William Carey and the author of *Rājā Pratāpāditya-caritra* (1801) and *Lipimālā* (1802), two of the best textbooks that were prepared for the British writer-students of the College of Fort William in Calcutta, was the first notable prose writer employing the popular (or the 'Munshi') style.

As a counterblast to the growing domination of the Muslim court culture through the centuries the grip of orthodoxy was tightening—from which Vaishnavism offered a way of escape for a time; but by the eighteenth century Vaishnav orthodoxy had become no less rigid than the brahmanical. As a reaction new faiths appeared, faiths that

sprung from Vaishnav heterodoxy and tried to ignore caste, creed and formality in religion. The supremacy of the brahmans was the special target of their offensive, even though some of their leaders were themselves brahmans. This spirit of challenge was tinged with a critical attitude of disbelief which sometimes also assailed the orthodox faiths and beliefs. Such a modernistic outlook is not altogether absent in the most representative writer of the century, Bhāratcandra, who was an orthodox brahman but at the same time very well read in Persian. Bhāratcandra wrote a big 'Maṅgala' poem, and it was a 'Maṅgala' poem to end all poems of that genre. His pen tried to sketch gods but succeeded sometimes only in turning out caricatures, in spite of his more than full command over the then poet's craft. This was because he lacked the faith of his early predecessors. It was Rāmānanda Yatī who expressed unmistakable scepticism in the introductory portion of his *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* (1766) where he challenges the veracity of Mukundarām's claim that Caṇḍī had appeared to him on his way to Āḍaḍā. To quote Rāmānanda in translation:

> If Caṇḍī did appear how could it have been told in a narrative poem? Only people who lack common sense say that it is quite true that Caṇḍī had appeared to the way-farer. To remove such incorrectness and to impart sense to the people Rāmānanda Yatī writes this poem on Caṇḍī at requests from many quarters. Please do not take offence, anybody; I have the approval of many.

Rāmānanda was a pundit and a sannyāsin with many disciples. He wrote several treatises on Yoga and Tantrism and commentaries in Sanskrit. His only other work in Bengali is a *Rāmāyaṇa* poem (1762) where he mentions the work of Tulsīdās.

As regards the general output the eighteenth century saw a continuation of the seventeenth. There was no break

in the mass production of Vaishnav songs and biographies and in the repetition of narrative poetry on the various deities.

Among Vaishnav biographical works two are of outstanding importance: Narahari Cakravartī's *Bhaktiratnākar* (vicariously an encyclopædia of Vaishnav lore) and Lāldās's *Bhaktamāl* (a biographical encyclopædia based on the Brajabuli poem by Nābhāji and its commentary by Priyādās). Among the notable productions of the narrative ('Maṅgal') poetry are included the *Dharmamaṅgal* poems by Ghanarām Cakravartī entitled *Kaviratna* (Jewel of Poets), and by Māṇikrām Gāṅgulī, written in 1711 and 1781 respectively. Ghanarām wrote in a chaste style while Māṇikrām preferred the colloquial. Both works contain aphoristic lines in plenty, which was really a peculiarity of the verse style in the eighteenth century.

An outstanding work is Rāmeśvar Bhaṭṭācarya's *Śiva-saṅkīrttan* (1710). The poem deals with the same topic as in the introductory part of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* of Mukundarām, but the treatment here is entirely popular and the style is in conformity. The theme in popular poetry had been largely amorous but Rāmeśvar produced very successfully a 'chaste poem' ('bhadra kāvya') out of it. In spite of his unpretentious poem Rāmeśvar's claim as one of the best poets of the century is unassailable. His power of observation is keen and his sympathy almost overflowing. Rāmeśvar's poem bears ample evidence of a very low level of agrarian economy in South-west Bengal which had been always a purely rice-producing area. His hero (Śiva) is therefore delineated as a very poor farmer and his heroine (Gaurī) a poor farmer's wife who would be satisfied with two square meals a day and a few yards of *sāri* to clothe. But the poet's faith was not shaky. In sincerity also Rāmeśvar's poem is one of the best of the century, if indeed it is not the best.

Bhāratcandra Rāy entitled *Guṇākar* (Mine of Virtuosity) is the only poet of pre-modern Bengali literature whose whole career is known to us. He was born some time about 1712

in a brahman zamindar family in the Bhursuṭ area of South Rāḍha. As was then customary, Bhāratcandra was married in his teens. For an unknown reason he left home before he had completed his studies and came to a village near Hooghly, where he lived for some years and read Sanskrit and Persian. His earliest attempts in Bengali, two very short poems on the deity Satya-Nārāyaṇ, were written here (1737). On his return home he was directed by his father to assist him in the management of their dwindling estate which was lease-hold property under the Raja of Burdwan. Just after the death of Raja Kīrtticandra (1740) the estate of the poet's father was confiscated on some pretext by the manager of the Burdwan raja. Bhāratcandra came to Burdwan to appeal to the widow of Kīrtticandra. But the manager was too much for him. Before he could put forward his appeal Bhāratcandra was put in prison. He somehow managed to escape from goal and took the main road to Orissa. He came to Cuttack and thence to Puri where he stayed for some time and was initiated into Vaishnav mendicancy. Then he set out for Brindavan, but on the way he was recognized by a relative and taken to his father-in-law's place and from there sent home. As it was no longer a home of plenty and comfort and as he was not exactly welcome as a prodigal son, Bhāratcandra had soon to go out again and seek his fortune. He came to Chundernagore and found employment under the local agent of the French government. Appreciating his literary qualities the agent introduced him to Raja Kṛṣṇacandra Rāy of Krishnagar who was then one of the best patrons of brahman scholars. The Raja made him his court poet on a decent salary and gave him farm lands and had him settled at Mulajor on the Hooghly. The poet brought his old father to live with him and also the family deities. He had no further connection with his old home. Bhāratcandra died in 1760 at the age of forty-eight.

Under the ægis of Kṛṣṇacandra the poet first compiled (some time before 1750) *Rasamañjarī*, an erotico-rhetorical

work based on a Sanskrit text, and then wrote his magnum opus *Annadāmaṅgal* or *Annapūrṇāmaṅgal* (Eulogy of the Food-giving Goddess) which was completed in 1753. *Annadāmaṅgal* is really a trilogy comprising three practically independent poems: *Annadāmaṅgal* proper (describing the story of Śiva and Pārvatī with the addition of the poet's original episode of Pārvatī becoming the Food-giving goddess by offering cooked food to famished Śiva), *Vidyāsundar* (an erotic romance) and *Mānsiṃha* (an historical romance on the conflict of Jahangir with Pratāpāditya of Jessore). The first was written in support of the worship of the Food-giving deity instituted by the poet's patron Kṛṣṇacandra. The second treats what was then the most popular theme of amorous poetry favoured by the high society in the townships along the Hooghly. The third was intended to glorify the founder of the family of Kṛṣṇacandra. For the treatment of the story of Śiva and Pārvatī, Bhāratcandra is deeply indebted to Rāmeśvar Bhaṭṭācārya. Rāmeśvar also belonged to South Rāḍhā, and his poem must have been familiar to him.

Bhāratcandra's narration of the story of Vidyā and Sundar is recognized as his best achievement. He had several predecessors in the field, including a Muslim and a Hindu poet from Chittagong,[2] and more than a couple of followers,[3] but his poem supersedes them all. For well nigh a century Bhāratcandra's *Vidyāsundar* dominated the poetic literature of the Calcutta region. Even as late as the sixth decade of the nineteenth century when English literature was not unknown to the educated Bengali, Bhāratcandra was regarded as the best poet of Bengal. The printed literature of the first half of the nineteenth century largely consisted of the various

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[2] The former (Shāh Birid Khān) belonged to the seventeenth and the latter (Govindadās) to the early eighteenth century. Śrīdhar's and Kṛṣṇarām's poems have been previously mentioned. Balarām Cakravartī also was a predecessor of Bhāratcandra.

[3] These include Rādhākānta Miśra of Calcutta (1767), Rāmprasād Sen *Kavirañjan*, Nidhirām Cakravartī *Kavicandra* and Madhusūdan Cakravartī *Kavīndra* (1842).

editions (prices varying from rupee one to one anna) and imitations of Bhāratcandra's poem.

The story of Vidyā and Sundar is briefly this: Vidyā was the beautiful and accomplished daughter of king Vīrasiṃha who had no other issue. She had vowed that she would marry only the man that would beat her in academic contest. Sundar, the only son of king Guṇasindhu came to win the hand of the princess. He obtained lodging in the home of a woman Hīrā who was the florist to Vidyā. The woman acting as the go-between arranged contact between the prince and the princess. By the grace of goddess Kālī, Sundar succeeded in digging an underground passage from his lodging house to Vidyā's quarters in the king's palace. The lovers met every night and Vidyā became *enceinte*. When the fact became known to her parents, they scolded her and set about to catch the unknown lover. The ingenuity of the police chief traced the clues to Sundar and he was ordered by the king to be put to death. When he was being led to the execution ground Sundar prayed to Kālī and it so happened that a man who knew Sundar as the son of a king came there. On being properly identified Sundar was released and married to the princess. A son was born to them. After some time Sundar returned home with his wife and son.

In the poem *Mānsiṃha,* Bhāratcandra occasionally shows a style that abounds in Persian and Hindi vocables and idioms. This style was not his innovation as is generally believed but is an adaptation of the diction that the Muslim writers of Bhāratcandra's homeland used. Bhāratcandra knew this poetry and he possessed good knowledge of Persian, Hindi and Oriya. The subject-matter of the poem being mainly concerned with the Mughal court and administration it was not wholly unexpected that the poet should use, as occasion demanded, the Hindustani style (known to the contemporary European as the language of the Moors) instead of the pure Bengali style as in the other two poems.

Bhāratcandra's trilogy contains a number of songs which resemble the Vaishnav lyrics in spirit and content but differ from them in structure and in freshness. The best exercise of Bhāratcandra's talent as a poet is to be found in these songs. A specimen in translation:

> I cannot stay at home. My heart aches. My heart comes out at the sharp call of the cuckoo. I will meet my lover Śyām the prince and will sell myself at his lotus feet. Thinking of this, Bhārat is surging with emotion. The *affaire de cœur* is not unknown to people, and the girl friends talk about it. Who can sacrifice herself and stand so much? If social standing and family prestige go, let them! Who cares? He alone in India is blessed who is loved by Śyām.

In another respect also the poet was true to the spirit of his time. From the beginning of the century, if not earlier, topical subjects (generally humorous) drew the attention of the unsophisticated writers. Bhāratcandra was not unaware of the vogue which had not yet been recognized in high (i.e. traditional) poetry. Accordingly he wrote in a humorous vein a few very short poems (containing two or four distichs) on such subjects as the seasons, the wind, desire, Kṛṣṇa to Rādhā, Rādhā to Kṛṣṇa, the weasel, the flatterer, etc. One such poem is written in Hindustani and another is a macaronic composition employing four languages: Sanskrit, Bengali, Persian and Hindustani. Bhāratcandra could write good verses in Sanskrit also, the best instance of which is the 'Octet on the Nāg' (*Nāgāṣṭaka*). This poem in eight stanzas was written as an appeal to the poet's patron when one Rāmdev Nāg, an agent of the Raja of Burdwan, attempted to oust the poet from the lands granted to him by Kṛṣṇacandra. There is a clever pun on the words 'nāga' and 'Kṛṣṇa'. Just as the people of Vraja had appealed to Kṛṣṇa when the waters of the Yamunā were infested by the serpent Kāliya, so did

the poet now appeal to Kṛṣṇa (-candra) for relief against the oppression of (Rāmdev) Nāg.

Following a practice of the day Bhāratcandra attempted to write a play in Sanskrit with vernacular songs interspersed. The subject-matter was the purāṇic story of the killing of the buffalo demon by Caṇḍī, but the poet died before he could proceed beyond the prologue.

Rāmprasād Sen *Kaviranjan* belonged to Kumārhaṭṭa, a place about 25 miles from Calcutta up the Hooghly. His *Vidyāsundar* was written some time in the sixth or seventh decade of the century. The influence of Bhāratcandra is noticeable in it. In style and characterization Rāmprasād is inferior to his predecessor but in poetic fancy he is undoubtedly superior. Rāmprasād's humour is less objectionable. His other works include *Kālīkīrttan* and the fragmentary *Kṛṣṇakīrttan*. These poems were written in the form of the new 'Pāñcāli' style that had developed from the older 'Kīrttan' style.

There are a number of very popular devotional songs of the Mother Goddess bearing the signature of Rāmprasād. The simple and appealing melody associated with these songs is also attributed to the poet who was looked upon as a saint. But this melody and the songs pertaining to it were probably the work of another Rāmprasād (a brahman) belonging to Calcutta who was reputed as a composer of 'Kabi' songs. This Rāmprasād was a younger contemporary of the first (who was a Vaidya). The songs are purely devotional, being appeals to God the Mother, couched in the words of a wayward but repentant child. There is little else, and the very high praise accorded to these songs by some critics is more due to the devotional appeal and to a reaction against the over-emphasis on the Vaishnav songs than to any profundity of thought or newness of expression. The sentiments evoked by the songs are a combination of homely affection and pure devotion and therefore

their appeal is irresistible. The poet-devotee's outlook can be illustrated by one of his best-known songs:

> O my heart, you know not the farmer's way of work. This your person, an excellent area of land, is lying fallow and it would have produced wealth if it had been properly cultivated. Fence it in with the name of Kālī and there will not be any loss of the crop—it is the strong fence of the Goddess with the loose tresses, and even Death dare not come near it. Do you not know that the plot is sure to be confiscated, be it today or a century hence? And it is on mortgage. So, O my heart! do you cultivate the field and harvest the crop to the last sheaf. Sowing the seed lent by the guru, do you irrigate with the water of Devotion. If you cannot do all this alone, O my heart! you may well take Rāmprasād as a help.

As the religious interest and the ritualistic substance in religious poetry was wearing thinner and thinner the literary tendencies were seeking new outlets from the time-worn patterns of narrative poetry and Vaishnav lyrics, and poetry and music were seeking a divorce which was long overdue. The separation did not actually take place, however, till the middle of the next century when the printing press had made poetry cheaply available to the reading public and when English education had cleared the vision for a truer perspective of literature. But the new tendencies were gathering force by the middle of the eighteenth century. As a result we get, on the one hand, short poems on romantic love or on historical and topical subjects and on the other, short secular love songs. There were several attempts, however, at a compromise between the old ways and the new vogues. This is exemplified in the so-called 'Kabi' poetry and in the new 'Pāñcāli' which came into existence towards

the close of the century. For more than half a century the 'Kabi' poetry and the new Pāñcāli reigned supreme in the Calcutta region and in its penumbra and almost threatened to swamp the promise of a literary revival. But the vulgar artificiality of 'Kabi' poetry with its elaborate but soulless music was doomed from its very inception. The new 'Pāñcāli' survived till it was superseded towards the close of the nineteenth century by the vogue of Bengali drama and the new 'Yātrā' (musical play) based on it.

The verse tales that came into currency could not at once discard their pseudo-religious frame which tradition demanded. So even the tales including those taken from the Vikramāditya-Bhoja saga and other folk-lore were treated as Āgama[4] or couched in the form of panegyric[5] to Satya-Pīr, Kālī, the sun god, or the goddess of learning. There were also secular tales, frankly amorous and without any veneer of adventure. Some of the themes of such tales were a common stock in the eastern region. For instance, the story of Saruf's *Dāminīcaritra* (known in a manuscript of the late eighteenth century) is current in Assam as well as in western Bihar. It was the Muhammedan writers who distinguished themselves in such secular tales in verse. Saruf, if his name is not a corruption of Svarūp, must have been a Muhammedan. Khalil, the author of the tale of Cāndramukhī,[6] certainly was one. Such tales, narrated or sung in the style of the old narrative poetry, have been popular in north-east Bengal till very recently. Khalil's poem is one of the best and least adulterated specimens of this kind of narrative poetry.

Among the historical poems the best known (though trivial as a literary piece) is *Mahārāṣtrā Purāṇ* by Gaṅgārām. The name is pretentious but the work is a small poem of less than a couple of hundred lines. It describes one of the

[4] A Tantrist narrative treatise which is put in the form of Śiva speaking to Pārvatī.

[5] Short poems of the 'Maṅgala' type.

[6] Published from Sylhet in Sylhet Nāgarī characters (1877).

worst raids in West Bengal led by the Maratha chief Bhāskar Paṇḍit which ended in his assassination. The author was a contemporary if not actually an eye-witness. As an historical document Gaṅgārām's poem has some value.

The other historical poems were all written towards the close of the century or by the beginning of the next. These are mostly short ballads on local incidents and topical matters and belong properly to folk-poetry. As specimens of unorthodox and rugged verse some of these poems are not uninteresting. For instance the 'Song of the Road' by Rādhāmohan realistically records the plight of the forced labour that was secured by Warren Hastings in laying out the trunk road from Salkia to Candalgarh. To quote some lines:

> Leaving the ploughs uncared for in the fields the ploughmen ran away. Hundreds of men had come to recruit forced labour. They were as irresponsible as the devotee-recruiting fellows (for the Śiva worship) in the month of Caitra; they requisitioned the services of all and sundry and belaboured them and forced them by physical chastisement if necessary to work on the road. Canes in hand, they deal blows indiscriminately and for fear of the chastisement the navvies wear themselves out. They allow the labourers no food and no rest till sundown when they are let off. With shovels on back and a big basket in hand the navvies wearily move on to rest. In the dusk when the rations are distributed there is a hubbub; the navvies are stung by acute hunger and in impatience they shout the name of God. Their cry fetches the ration clerk accompanied by his assistant who doles out the rations. At the sight of the rations the navvies sit down in single file. As they receive the dole they move away quickly munching fried rice, and then they run together to the tank to drink. Their hunger and thirst thus relieved they stretch themselves on the dust. Their sleep is

> disturbed by ant-bites and in uneasiness they turn sides continually.

Another ballad written by a contemporary village versifier from North Bengal is worth mention. On the recommendation of the British collector of the district Mr. Goodlad, a local zamindar had appointed some one as his manager (Dewan) in Rangpur whom the ryots did not like—they wanted one Rāmvallabh Rāy in the post. They in a body approached the collector to have the appointment cancelled. The collector was ill at ease. He asked his office superintendent as to how he should proceed in the matter. The superintendent gave the only sensible advice. To quote the author Kṛṣṇahari Dās:

> The Dewan replied: Ryots may do anything; they may raise one high up to heaven and may cast one down to death. It is the ryots that account for the wealth of the land: the golden bangles you see everybody wearing are paid for by the ryots' money.

The collector had the good sense to withdraw his recommendation and appoint Rāmvallabh Rāy the nominee of the ryots as the manager of the estate.

TOWARDS the end of the seventeenth century Vaishnav poetry had been declining. Yet it remained as the most acceptable form of poetry mainly because its music was still vigorous and its possibilities had not yet been exhausted. But even that could not stave off the stagnation of the Kīrttan poetry in the next century. The limited theme in Vaishnav poetry was wearing thin and in consequence the popular lyric poetry (rather songs) of the late eighteenth century had little connection with the story of the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It is quite true that the names Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are not absent in many of them. But the names here are really

aliases of mundane lovers. In form the new lyrics (songs) differ entirely from the old. The diction has become somewhat free and easy, though verbose, and the verse lines of a lyric generally have a single rhyme. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the lyric songs had been much reduced in form, the shortest containing not more than four lines of verse. Bhāratcandra, the poet of the century, had been fully alive to the value of the new lyric type, and his very big narrative poem includes more than fifty such songs. Some of these contain the best lines he ever wrote.

Perhaps the earliest of the eighteenth century writers to put Vaishnav lyrics in the new and popular form were Lālcandra and Nandalāl. The oldest of the 'Kabiwallah'-s, the two are believed to have been brothers. Most of their songs were written jointly and as such they bear their joint signature. But by far the best writer of love songs was Rāmnidhi Gupta, better known as Nidhu Bābu (1742-1839). He was also one of the leading sponsors of the semi-classical style of music, called 'Ākhḍāi' (literally 'Clubroom Music'), that came into vogue in Calcutta towards the close of the eighteenth century. Nidhu Bābu introduced into Bengali the 'Tappā' (i.e. simple in form and light in execution) variety of song from Hindi. His songs rarely exceed four verse lines. The compact form necessitated terseness of expression, which added much to their literary quality. Thus:

> Look, my lover goes away stepping slowly and he is looking back. How can you tell me to go home? He was in my heart, and now I see him outside. When he goes out of my sight he takes his seat back in my heart.

The poet's love for his mother-tongue is feelingly expressed in perhaps the most well-known song of his.

> So many lands have so many tongues, but none gives satisfaction more fully than one's own speech. There are so many rivers and lakes; but what good are they

to the Cātak? Her thirst can be quenched only by the rain-drops.

Nidhu Bābu's contemporary Śrīdhar was a professional reciter of *Purāṇa* stories and so he bore the designation 'Kathak' as a surname. Some of Śrīdhar's songs are in no way inferior to Nidhu Bābu's, as for instance the following:

> I love thee not so that thou wouldst love me in return. It is my nature that I know nothing but thee. The sweet smile of thy moon face, when I see it I flush in joy. So I came to see thee and not to show myself to thee.

Rām Basu (1787-1829), another contemporary, was a well-known writer of 'Kabi' songs.[7] As compared to Nidhu Bābu's and Śrīdhar's songs, Rām Basu's are oversized and long-winded. Their theme is also less general. There are however occasional lines bright and sincere. For instance:

> My dear, my feeling continues as a heart-ache, since he has departed for abroad. I was about to speak it out but could not; for the shame of it I could not express my love to him.

Dāśarathi Rāy (1806-57) started his career as a song writer to the 'Kabi' troupe led by Ākā Bāiti, who was herself a reputed singer. After a time he gave up writing 'Kabi' songs and set up his own party of 'Pāñcāli' singers. This new 'Pāñcāli' was a compromise between the 'Kabi' song and the Purāṇa recitation on the one hand and the traditional musical play (Yātrā) and Kīrttan, on the other. The subject-matter of Dāśarathi's compositions was not always traditional, although the themes of most of them were taken

[7] The 'Kabi' songs were almost always sung by two contesting parties, and the only instruments played were the small drum ('Ḍhol') and the bell-metal plate ('Kāṁsī'). The topic was generally mythological. The first singer would put a question in song, and the second would give a reply and put in his own question. The singer who was unable to give a reply would lose the contest.

from the Kṛṣṇa legend and some from the Rāma and the Śiva stories. Dāśarathi treated contemporary events of social interest as themes of the light variety of his 'Pāñcāli' compositions, such as re-marriage of widows, profligacy in town-life, and perniciousness of English education. Dāśarathi's audience was mainly the rural folk and the devotional sentiment which was the dominant note of his serious compositions had tremendous appeal for them. Sweet jingle of alliteration was an attractive feature of Dāśarathi's poetry. He adopted many rural tunes for his songs which added much to their attraction. For these three reasons Dāśarathi's compositions furnished the best popular entertainment throughout West Bengal in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Dāśarathi's rival in Central and East Bengal was Kṛṣṇakamal Gosvāmī whose 'Pāñcāli' compositions lean more on the 'Yātrā' side while his songs are of the Kīrttan type. In the attempts at modernization and rejuvenation of Vaishnav poetry the success of Madhu Kān (1813-68) was more effective. Like Kṛṣṇakamal, Madhu Kān belonged to Central Bengal and had his training in East Bengal. Madhu was fond of alliteration as Dāśarathi was, but not to the same extent. Unlike Dāśarathi, Madhu wrote in a simple language and his compositions were not 'Pāñcāli' pieces but Kīrttan songs. Madhu Kān had invented his own melodies and had developed his own style of music which was a pleasing combination of the orthodox Kīrttan and the rural dance song. It was known as the 'Ḍhap' (i.e. Gesticulating) Kīrttan style of Madhu Kān. This style has continued to enjoy popularity, being sung almost exclusively by women singers of Kīrttan.

The main difference between the new 'Pāñcāli' and 'Yātrā' in the early nineteenth century was that the former was sung by one main singer and the latter by at least three, while both had supporting singers and instrument players. The most popular subject was the Kṛṣṇa stories. Slightly

less popular were the stories of Śiva and Pārvatī and the life-story of Chaitanya. By the middle of the century 'Yātrā' plays on the love story of Vidyā and Sundar obtained an immense vogue in the Calcutta region. The overture of the Yātrā compositions generally supplied the comic element. In the Kṛṣṇa plays the comic figures were the sage Nārad and his disciple 'Bās-dev' (i.e. Vyāsa-deva). In the Vidyā-Sundar plays obscenity was often served for the comic. The songs were the main and fixed feature of the Yātrā plays. The connecting prose and/or verse lines were supplied *extempore* by the actor-singers themselves.

15

DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY PROSE

THE establishment of the British rule in Bengal in the seventh decade of the eighteenth century did not, for more than half a century, cause any appreciable stir in the economic and cultural life of the people except that there was a growing sense of security based on a belief in legal justice. The introduction of the printing press was soon destined to change the course of the contemporary literary currents. The credit of designing and casting Bengali types successfully and of printing the first book where the Bengali types were used goes to Charles Wilkins, an officer of the East India Company. He was a fine Sanskrit scholar, translator of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the principal collaborator of Sir William Jones in founding the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784). The Bengali types were first used in Nathanial Braney Halhed's Bengali Grammar (in English) printed at Hooghly in 1778. Halhed too was a good scholar, and his knowledge of the Bengali language and literature was astounding for the day.

The Bengali books first to be printed in Bengali types were the prose translations of legal codes adopted by the East India Company for administration in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The translations were done under the supervision of the British clerks of the Company. Jonathan Duncan was responsible for the translation of the *Regulations for the Administration of Justice in the Courts of Dewanee Adaulut* (Calcutta 1785). Neil Benjamin Edmunstone supervized the translation of the *Criminal Code* (Calcutta 1791) and Henry Pitts Forster edited the translation of the revenue regulations that were known as the Cornwallis Code (1793). These translations closely followed the contemporary documentary style but with a minimum of Perso-Arabic words and phrases. This was rather unexpected. But the British 'Writers' in Bengali had the greatest reverence for Sanskrit

and very strong liking for Bengali the language of the province. This is what Halhed says in the preface of his Grammar regarding the potentiality of Bengali: 'It is the sole channel of personal and epistolary communication among the Hindoos of every occupation and tribe. All their business is transacted, and all their accounts are kept in it; . . . . In short, if vigour, impartiality and dispatch be required to the operations of government, to the distribution of Justice, to the collection of revenues and to the transaction of commerce, they are only to be secured by a proper attention to that dialect used by the body of the people; especially as it is much better calculated both for public and private affairs by its plainness, its precision and regularity of construction than the flowery sentences and modulated periods of the Persian.'

The establishment of the Baptist Mission at Serampore in 1800 by W. Carey (1761-1843), W. Ward and J. Marshman was an event in the cultural history of Bengal. The missionaries took to the literary path for the spread of Christianity among the masses. Seeing that the common people of Bengal had a strong liking for devotional narratives and songs, Carey and his colleagues gave every attention to the translation of the Bible. They started a press at Serampore in the same year for printing the Bengali and other vernacular translations of the Bible. The New Testament in Bengali was published in 1801. Before that the translation of the Gospel of St. Matthews was published as a specimen in 1800. The Bengali Bible (*Dharma Pustak*) was completed in 1809. The draft of the Bengali Bible seems to have been made by the Bengali assistants of Carey, among whom the most notable was Rāmrām Basu. As Carey's knowledge of Bengali and Sanskrit advanced he began to replace purely Bengali words by lexical Sanskrit words in the subsequent editions published during his lifetime (1833), and he was always seeking advice from some Bengali scholars for necessary corrections. What Carey could never achieve, namely,

a readable translation in Bengali of the New Testament was done a few years later by William Yates. It was printed in Roman characters in London in 1839.

In imitation of the Vaishnav biography the Serampore missionaries had the New Testament rendered in Bengali verse also. But neither in the form of the printed book nor in the guise of old manuscripts this Christian poetry could make any headway. The literary path always proved a blind alley.

For the express purpose of teaching Indian languages to the newly recruited British 'Writers' of the East India Company the College of Fort William was founded in Calcutta in May 1800. Carey was put in charge of the Bengali (and later also of the Sanskrit) section. He appointed as assistant teachers pundits and munshis, some of whom had been his own teachers and had helped him in the translation of the Bible. The Serampore Mission Press published the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttivās (1802-03) and the first book of the *Mahābhārata* of Kāśīrām (1802-04),[1] the first Bengali poems to be ever printed, for the use of the students of the College of Fort William.

As the poetry texts were not entirely suitable for imparting a practical knowledge of the spoken tongue, Carey's first task as the professor of Bengali at the College was to produce prose treatises. At his instance his assistants were engaged in preparing prose texts for the use of the students of the College.[2] The best among these writers were Rāmrām Basu (d. 1813) and Mṛtyuñjay Vidyālaṅkār (d. 1819) whose writings represent respectively the 'Munshi' (i.e. the Persian scholar) and the 'Pundit' (i.e. the Sanskrit scholar) style of the contemporary Bengali prose.

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[1] The complete text was edited by Jayagopāl Tarkālaṅkār and printed at Serampore in 1836. Some of the best lines in the vulgate text of the poem come from Tarkālaṅkār's emendations. He was a good writer of verse and a very well-known professor of Sanskrit poetry at the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta.

[2] All these books were printed at the Serampore Mission Press.

Two prose works by Rāmrām Basu were published (1801, 1802). In the first book (*Pratāpāditya-caritra*) the author utilized the current stories about Pratāpāditya of Jessore as well as references to him in the Persian chronicles of the Mughal Court. The style is easy and entirely narrative. The other work (*Lipimālā*) is really a book of essays and short narratives written in the form of letters. The style here is easier and rather colloquial. As the author said in the preface, *Lipimālā* was intended for helping the Company officers in the acquisition of the colloquial style of Bengali as well as in the acquaintance of the ordinary business life of the people.

Mṛtyuñjay Vidyālaṅkār's works are mainly adaptations and translations from Sanskrit. *Batriś Siṃhāsan* (1802) and *Hitopadeś* (1808) are translations of the Sanskrit story books *Dvātriṁśat-puttalikā* and *Hitopadeśa* respectively. Some of these stories were already familiar in Bengali verse and also sporadically in halting prose. His *Rājāvāli* (String of Kings), published in 1808, appears to have been adapted from a contemporary Sanskrit work of the same title, based on the works of the Mughal chroniclers. It is the first history of India written in Bengali prose. The best known work of Mṛtyuñjay, *Prabodhacandrikā* (Moonlight of Awakening), was published posthumously in 1833. It contains much that can be taken as original writing, and it shows both the scholastic and the colloquial prose styles. The popular tales in the colloquial style are really amusing. It is likely that *Prabodhacandrikā* was left unfinished by Mṛtyuñjay and was completed by his son Rāmjay Tarkālaṅkār (d. 1857) who succeeded his father as a teacher in the College of Fort William. *Prabodhacandrikā* had a vogue for more than half a century as a textbook, first for the College of Fort William, then for the University of Calcutta. The other Bengali prose work by Mṛtyuñjay, *Vedāntacandrikā* (Calcutta 1817) had nothing to do with Carey or with the College of Fort William. It was written in protest against the Vedāntism

and the monotheistic worship sponsored by Rammohan Roy. For the benefit of European readers interested in the subject an English translation was appended. The language is in no way an improvement, and the indirect invectives against Rammohan Roy have detracted much from the effectiveness of Mṛtyuñjay's challenge.

As a prose writer Mṛtyuñjay was ponderous and pedantic and sometimes less intelligible than Rāmrām Basu. The specimens of the colloquial speech imbedded in *Prabodhacandrikā* are good in spite of much that now seems vulgar. The claim that this Fort William College pundit was the father of the literary prose in Bengali is extravagant but it cannot be denied that he wrote much and on a wide variety of topics.

Among the other Bengali teachers of the College of Fort William Rājīblocan Mukherji deserves more than a passing mention. His *Mahārāj Kṛṣṇacandra Rāyasya Caritraṃ* (Life of Mahārājā Kṛṣṇacandra Rāy) was printed at Serampore in 1805. It follows the pattern of Rāmrām Basu's work on the life-story of Pratāpāditya. Rājīblocan Mukherji's diction shows a distinct improvement upon that of his predecessors. Mukherji's sentences are short and simple. As a textbook it enjoyed popularity for a long time, longer than even *Prabodhacandrikā.*

Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) who was in many ways the forerunner of the new age that was dawning in India was the first writer of Bengali prose outside of textbooks—in his translations of two Vedanta treatises (1815) and of the Upanishads and in his polemical tracts in support of social and religious reformation (1818-23). To fight against the onslaught of the Serampore missionaries directed against Hinduism Rammohan Roy published periodicals and magazines in Bengali, English and Persian (1821-22). Poetry, too, was not foreign to his pen. He translated the *Bhagavadgītā* in Bengali verse and wrote some devotional songs. His earliest book on religious

reform was *Tuhfātul Muwāhhiddīn* written in excellent Persian (published before 1815). Rammohan's command over his mother tongue is amply shown in his Bengali grammar in English (1826) which he later translated into Bengali (published shortly after his death in 1833). This was the best Bengali grammar yet written, and in some respects it is not surpassed by the later attempts.

Rammohan Roy followed the pundit style of prose, but it was never pedantic, artificial or obscure. The reason is not far to seek. He was not a mere Sanskritist like Mṛtyuñjay Vidyālaṅkār, nor was he a purely Persian scholar like Rāmrām Basu. Besides Sanskrit and Persian he knew English and some Arabic. This polyglottic attainment made him free from the hypnotic influence of the involved flowery phraseology and from the nightmarish obsession of lexical words. Rammohan's Bengali bears no literary flourish but is simple, direct and expressive. It was no doubt somewhat archaic; none the less it forms an achievement in ease and precision seldom attained by his learned contemporaries.

What the high-priced and stiffly written textbooks published from Serampore could never attain and what the theological treatises of Rammohan Roy never aspired to was done by the publication of the weekly paper *Samācārdarpaṇ* (Mirror of Information) by the Serampore missionaries in May 1818.[3] The cue was taken up by Rammohan Roy and others in Calcutta and as a result there was a volley of periodicals, more or less short-lived, issued from the native press in Calcutta. The *Samācārdarpaṇ* and its younger Calcutta contemporaries served the common man, the man who knew only Bengali, not only with events and matters of topical interest but also with useful

[3] J. Marshman was the editor, and he had pundit assistants. *Bengal Gazette* of Gaṅgādhar Bhaṭṭacārji was almost a simultaneous publication from Calcutta. But the attempt was short-lived. *Samācardarpaṇ* was preceded by *Digdarśan* (April 1818), also from Serampore. It was a magazine of articles on various informative and educative topics.

information and amusing stories. Untramelled by Sanskritic learning and scholastic unintelligibility the prose diction of the periodicals was not unacceptable to the reading public. It was through such journals that literary prose found its first currency among the literates.

The textbooks published from Serampore Mission Press were costly, bulky and stiff reading. For the purpose of supplying easier, shorter and cheaper textbooks the School Book Society was established in Calcutta in 1817. Among its members were Carey and Raja Rādhākānta Deb (1783-1867). The various textbooks published by the Society were well received and they did much for the spread of education in the first half of the nineteenth century. Among the textbook writers of the period were Britishers such as Felix Carcy, J. Lawson, W. H. Pearce, J. D. Pearson and W. Yates. Most of the books and many of the scientific treatises were translations from English, which were required by the newly established Hindu College (1817) and Serampore College (1818), and by the schools that were set up in Calcutta and outside. History was the most common subject of these textbooks.

Felix Carey (d. 1822) the eldest son of William Carey initiated an encyclopædia in Bengali by publishing the first volume, a textbook on Physiology and Anatomy (1819). The early death of the author put a stop to the fulfilment of the scheme. Years later K. M. Banerji (1813-85) an alumnus of Hindu College who adopted the Christian faith and took Holy orders, was able to fulfil the desire of the late F. Carey. Banerji's *Vidyākalpadrum* or *Encyclopædia Bengalensis* (published also in an English-Bengali bilingual edition) was produced in thirteen volumes (1846-51). It contained translations or adaptations of historical treatises, geometry, geography, moral and didactic essays and tales. There were also selections from the works of some of the writers of the Fort William College textbooks. Banerji's style showed a marked improvement upon

that of the general textbook writers, but his being a Christian convert stood against a merited popularity of his works. In later days when Banerji's fame as a scholar and a speaker was established, the prejudice against his works died down and his treatise on the Six Systems of Indian Philosophy (1867) was retained as a textbook for University examinations for a long time.

Banerji was the first Indian to write a play in the western manner. *The Persecuted* (1832) was written in English but the subject-matter of this drama was his own personal problem which was also the most acute problem facing the young recipients of English education, that is, the growing and apparently irreconcilable impact of the English educated modern mind with the stolid conservatism of the orthodox society. Had the drama been written in Bengali the regeneration of Bengali literature would not have been retarded for nearly a quarter of a century.

In 1851 the Education Department of the Government sponsored the Vernacular Literature Committee as an auxiliary to the School Book Society. The sole programme of the Committee (later renamed Society) was to foster a healthy domestic literature in Bengali by publishing educative and entertaining books, original or adapted from English and Sanskrit, and written in a simple style and priced very low. The first and most successful venture of the Committee was the publication (from 1851) of *Vividhārthasaṅgraha* (Collection of Various Matters), a monthly illustrated magazine, edited by Rājendralāl Mitra (d. 1891), a reputed antiquarian, a versatile scholar and one of the leading personalities of the day. Incidentally the magazine did much for the new literary movement that was soon inaugurated. Rājendralāl was a good writer of Bengali and a good critic. Some of the pioneer writings of the new school of poetry introduced by Raṅgalāl Banerji and established by Michael Madhusudan Dutt were published for the first time in *Vividhārthasaṅgraha*. The educative value of

its informative articles cannot be over-estimated. Rabindranath Tagore drank his first cup of delightful knowledge from this, Rājendralāl's 'penny' magazine. The first serious attempts at a history of the Bengali language and literature appeared in the pages of the magazine. Rājendralāl himself was the chief contributor. The publications of the Vernacular Literature Committee, specially the biographical narratives and the story books, became quite popular. It included John Robinson's translation of *Robinson Crusoe* (1852), Dr. Edward Roer's translation of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1853), Ānandacandra Vedāntavāgīśa's adaptation of *Kathāsaritsāgara,* and Madhusūdan Mukherji's domestic tale *Suśīlār Upākhyān* in three parts (1859-65). The last book to be published by the Society before it was wound up was Madhusūdan Mukherji's adaptation of *Krilof's Fables* (1870). The publications of the Committee were intended also to drive away the Christian tales and tracts that were being printed in plenty.

Whât was first attempted by Rammohan Roy in the middle teens was repeated successfully in the early forties of the century by Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and his collaborators; that is literary prose was rescued from the blind alley of textbook writing. Devendranath, the leading protagonist of the Brahmo Samaj after Rammohan Roy, instituted *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā,* a monthly magazine and organ of the Brahmo Samaj and of its education branch Tattvabodhinī Sabhā (established 1839). Devendranath Tagore was a very able prose writer, as his sermons to the Brahmo Samaj testify. His epistolary style was even better, and this style was inherited by his eldest and youngest sons, Dwijendranath and Rabindranath, two of the most original stylists of Bengali prose and poetry. Rājnārāyaṇ Basu, a valued friend of the Tagore family, was one of the distinguished contributors to *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā.*

The magazine was edited for twelve years by Akṣaykumār Datta (1820-86) who wrote his informative articles

primarily for the journal. These articles (mostly adaptations from English) were later compiled into books which were profitably accepted as High School and College text-books for generations. Datta's treatises on moral education were also well received. He was one of the first Indians to take up the study of Science. His *Bhāratavarṣīya Upāsaksampradāy* (Indian Religious Sects) published in two volumes (1870 and 1883) is an improvement on and enlargement of H. H. Wilson's *Sketch on the Religious Sects of Hindus* (first published in *Asiatic Researches* vols. 16 and 17) and is a monument of research work of permanent value. Akṣaykumār Datta's attitude was scientific, and his terse and economic style of prose fully conforms to that attitude. His style has no pretension to literary polish but it brought about what was badly needed, that is coherence in diction and precision in expression.

WHAT Datta's style lacked was supplied by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-91), a collaborator of Akṣaykumār Datta in *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*. Bengali literary prose obtained balance and rhythm at the hand of Vidyasagar, without losing precision and expressiveness. He was the first Bengali prose writer with the proper feeling for the correct word and for this reason even the long-winded lexical words used by him are not felt as foreign or bizarre. The sonorousness of Vidyasagar's solid style has a subtle charm which few of his imitators and followers could achieve and none but Rabindranath Tagore could surpass.

Vidyasagar was the most outstanding personality in the middle and final decades of the nineteenth century. His deep learning in Sanskrit, his high critical acumen, his wholesome and very modern outlook on life, his integrity and forcefulness of character and his indomitable fighting spirit that would never compromise with evil or injustice, made him respected by all. He always rang true in his

public as well as personal relations. He lived the simple life of a brahman pundit but in spirit he was more advanced than the most vociferous supporters of social reform. In human qualities, too, few of his countrymen have surpassed him.

Vidyasagar's first two or three books were written as textbooks for the College of Fort William. The first treatise dealt with the legendary story of Krishna. It was based on a Hindi prose work (*Premsāgar*) written as a textbook for the College in its early days. But it was never published. The second book *Vetālpañcaviṃśati* (Twenty-five Tales of the Vetāl), published in 1847, was not based entirely on the Sanskrit original but was partly an adaptation of its Hindi version. The publication of Vidyasagar's Vetāl tales is a landmark in the history of Bengali prose. Of the textbooks that followed five were adaptations from English and two from Sanskrit. The last two, *Śakuntalā* (1854) and *Sītār Vanavās* (Exile of Sita; 1860), as well as *Bhrāntivilās* (an adaptation of the story of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*; 1869) show Vidyasagar's prose at its best. His textbooks in Bengali range from a book of the Bengali alphabet (*Varṇaparicay*) to the best elementary and advanced grammars of classical Sanskrit that have ever been written in a modern Indo-Aryan language (*Upakramaṇikā* and *Vyākaraṇakaumudī*). He compiled a series of Sanskrit readers which have been used as textbooks in and outside Bengal, and he brought out critical editions of the works of Kālidāsa and of some other poets and philosophers of Sanskrit. Vidyasagar's high critical acumen is revealed in his brief survey of Classical Sanskrit literature (*Saṃskṛta Sāhitya-viṣayak Prastāv*; 1851) and even more so in the preface and the exegetical notes in his edition of *Meghadūta* (1868). Vidyasagar began a prose translation of the *Mahābhārata* which was published serially in *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*. After the first book was completed he relegated the task to Kālīprasanna Siṃha who had much better resources for under-

taking the translation of the great epic and its publication (1859-1866). Vidyasagar supervised the work undertaken by Kālīprasanna Siṃha.

Vidyasagar's bigger Bengali books are the polemical treatises in support of widow remarriage (in two volumes; 1855) and in opposition to polygamy (also in two volumes; 1871, 1873). The first work was largely responsible for the passing of the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856. Two anonymous satirical sketches impugning the private morals of some of the leading pundits who supported the continuance of polygamy, both published in 1873, are universally ascribed to Vidyasagar. The style of these satires is smart and good reading.

Vidyasagar was a pundit among pundits. The reputation of his scholarship even as a student of the Government Sanskrit College (established 1824) and his success as the Principal of the College (1852-58) made him the leading pundit of the day, even though some of his colleagues were great masters of Sanskrit lore. Vidyasagar's achievement in Bengali language and literature was indeed a difficult feat, the more so as being a pundit himself he set free Bengali prose from the tortuous verbosity and pedantic unintelligibility that went for the high style of Bengali prose. The best compliment to Vidyasagar, vicariously made, was paid by an anonymous pundit who had summarily condemned a writing of Vidyasagar on the ground that it was quite easy to follow.

It was not so much the simplicity and charm of Vidyasagar's style as the reception of his textbooks that prompted the teachers and the alumni of Sanskrit College to emulate the master in adapting Sanskrit works in Bengali prose. The better known among the early Sanskrit College writers are Tārāśankar Tarkaratna and Rāmgati Nyāyaratna. Tarkaratna made an abridged and free translation of Bāṇa's prose romance *Kādambarī*. Nyāyaratna wrote many books among which the most important was a history of Bengali

literature (1872-73) after the model of Vidyasagar's monograph on Sanskrit literature. Though not a brahman pundit, Nilmani Basak was one of the most successful of the Sanskrit College group of prose writers. His first literary venture was collaboration in a metrical adaptation of *Persian Tales* from English (1834). Later Basak translated *Arabian Nights* (also from English) into Bengali prose, the first volume of which came out in 1850. His most successful book was *Navanārī* (Nine Women; 1852) containing biographical sketches of nine illustrious Indian women from history and mythology. As the author admitted in the preface the book was revised by Vidyasagar before publication. Among Basak's other works mention may be made of his History of India in three volumes (1856-58). It is based on an English original but the language never smacks of it and the diction is simple and easy.

The Hindu College writers who had made their *début* as early as 1843 (in the pages of *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*) soon came under the influence of the Sanskrit College group through the common writers like Ānandacandra Vedāntavāgīs, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Hemcandra Vidyāratna and others. But the early Hindu Collegeans like Devendranath Tagore, Pyarichand Mitra (1814-83) and Rājnārāyaṇ Basu (1826-1900) and some of the later Collegeans like Dwijendranath Tagore and others were not susceptible to this influence. The Hindu College writers usually show two styles in their writings, a high and a low style. The high style is seldom as learned as that of the Sanskrit College group and the low style was never undignified and vulgar. But it was not so much in the style of composition as in outlook and orientation that the Hindu College alumni broke new ground in Bengali literature. Pyarichand Mitra and Bhudeb Mukherji sowed the seeds of Bengali fiction. Michael Madhusudan Dutt revolutionized Bengali poetry.

16

THE WESTERN STAGE AND THE EARLY DAYS OF THE BENGALI DRAMA

LONG before Young Bengal had begun to drink deep of English and other western literature, both classical and modern, its eyes had been dazzled by the stagecraft of the West. But it served only to spotlight the degenerate literary and musical taste of the contemporary Calcutta society and to give it a new vogue that did not die down until the sixties of the nineteenth century. Gerasim Lebedeff, a talented adventurer from Russia, had opened a 'Bengally Theatre' in central Calcutta where before a full house he staged a Bengali musical play on 27th November 1795. The performance was repeated on 21st March 1796. As Lebedeff has written in the preface to his *Grammar of the Pure and Mixed East Indian Languages* (London 1801) the play was a free adaptation of an English farce entitled *The Disguise* (possibly the same as *The Disguises* by Chapman, translator of the *Iliad*), made by Lebedeff in collaboration with his Bengali teacher Goloknāth Dās and with the approval of pundits like Jagannāth Tarkapañcānan. Knowing well that the Bengali people preferred the comic to the serious and that the native performances were entirely musical and mimic, he selected songs from Bhāratcandra Rāy's *Vidyāsundar,* the most popular poem of the day, and set them in the play to which various comic interludes were added. The play was performed by an entirely Indian cast, both male and female, recruited for the purpose by Goloknāth Dās.

The two performances of Lebedeff's musical play which was as much low comedy as indigenous Yātrā, were highly entertaining to the audience. They specially liked the music interludes and the amorous songs. Although Lebedeff's season was exceedingly short and he could not put on the stage the Bengali version of another comic play (*Love is the Best Doctor*) which he had prepared, he gave,

unfortunately though unwittingly, a new life to the lower type of the contemporary Yātrā play. Bhāratcandra's *Vidyāsundar* became the most popular theme of the new Yātrā type in Calcutta, and interludes of vulgar mimicry of low class typical characters became an integral part of such performances. The influence of this low Yātrā went deep and this type of Bengali musical play and low comedy persisted almost up to the end of the nineteenth century.

The next stage performance of a Bengali play of which anything is known to us was made in late October 1835 at the residence of Navīncandra Basu in north Calcutta. It was an improvized musical play on the *Vidyāsundar* story and was performed by a mixed cast. The actresses were recruited from professional Kīrtan singers, 'Kabi' reciters and nautch girls, to whom the impersonation of the female characters of *Vidyāsundar* came quite natural.

In the meanwhile the number of English-educated men was steadily going up and the Hindu College boys were exerting their influence in cultural progress and social reform. Naturally the novelty of the stage came to be one of their main attractions. Prasannakumar Tagore and his friends set up the Hindoo Theatre in his garden house in the east suburb of Calcutta. It was opened on 21st December 1831 with selected portions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and H. H. Wilson's English rendering of Bhavabhūti's Sanskrit drama on the Rama story. The various parts were taken by the Hindu College boys.

Performance of English plays, particularly Shakespeare's plays, by Bengali students and professionals was rather popular among the English-educated people of Calcutta in the thirties, forties and fifties of the nineteenth century. One of the professionals, Vaiṣṇavcaraṇ Āḍhya, made his mark by playing the role of Othello at the Sans Souci Theatre (August-September 1848). Some of the higher educational institutions held regular amateur performances of Shakespearean drama.

The grandeur of the European stage and the novelty of acting the English plays turned the attention of the aspirants of literary fame from the cultivation of poetry to the writing of Bengali plays. There were a few abortive and half-hearted attempts by some Sanskritists who only translated or adapted Sanskrit drama. The first two dramatic compositions in Bengali that may be called original came out in 1852. One is a comedy modelled more or less on Sanskrit and having for its theme an episode from the *Mahābhārata,* and the other is a tragedy of the European type based on a typical Bengali folk-tale. Both the authors knew English. Tārācaraṇ Śikdār's *Bhadrārjun* dramatizes the story of Subhadrā's elopement with Arjuna. The author followed the European model of the drama in actions and situations as also in dividing acts into scenes (the latter characteristic, unknown in Sanskrit drama, has since become an invariable feature of Bengali plays). Two of the main features of the Sanskrit drama, the Actor-manager's prologue (*nāndī*) and the role of the Jester (*vidūṣaka*) are dropped. There is a prologue of a sort in verse, containing a gist of the play and an eulogy of the dramatic art. *Bhadrārjun* is written in prose and verse, and there are a few songs. It has little value as a dramatic composition and it does not seem to have ever been staged. The Bengali literary world of the day was not yet quite prepared for the adoption of the European form of the drama and so this pioneer work created little enthusiasm. The author, a mathematics teacher in a reputed educational institution in Calcutta, did not feel encouraged to write a second play. G. C. Gupta's *Kīrttivilās* is also written in prose and verse, and its style is rather archaic and somewhat less polished than that of *Bhadrārjun.* The plot is less firmly knit. The acts are divided into several scenes and the old-fashioned prologue is retained. There are songs too. The influence of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is obvious, not only in the behaviour of the hero but also in the arrangement of the plot. The

author was certainly daring in writing a tragic play forbidden by the Sanskrit dramaturgists. There is a long preface where he makes a very correct judgement of the indigenous Yātrā plays and their performance and puts in a strong plea for the European drama. The author seems to have been well read.

From 1853 Bengali playwrights followed two distinct patterns: one, the translation and adaptation of English plays, specially those of Shakespeare; and two, the translation and adaptation of the better known Sanskrit dramas. The works based on English originals were altogether futile productions; none of them were ever staged nor were they accepted as good reading matter. The adaptations from Sanskrit were more acceptable, and the stage performance of one of them, Rāmnārāyaṇ Tarkaratna's *Ratnāvalī* (first performed on 31st July 1858 at the garden house of the rajas of Paikpara) may be said to have started the Bengali drama on its popular career. Later adaptations of some plays of Shakespeare were distinct improvements on the earlier attempts and so they were staged with success in private and public theatres in the middle and late seventies of the century. These include Candrakālī Ghoṣ's *Kusumkumārī* (1868) based on *Cymbeline,* Harālal Rāy's *Rudrapāl* (1874), an adaptation of *Hamlet,* and Tāriṇīcaraṇ Pāl's *Bhīmsiṃha* (1875), an abridged form of *Othello.*

The growth of the Bengali drama in the late fifties and the early sixties of the century was accidental and haphazard. It was the private stage that stimulated writing of plays but the result usually fell far short of expectations. There are of course a few exceptions but these were not primarily conditioned by the requirements of the stage.

It was the spirit of social reform that appeared as the first and strongest urge produced by the impact of western education and culture. This urge, strangely enough, was less clearly manifest in the English-educated young Bengalee than in those who had received mainly Sanskrit education.

Vidyasagar was the leader of the latter, and in literature he and some of his colleagues, students and admirers were more vocal and insistent but less demonstrative. While the Hindu Collegeans were busy in staging English dramas or translating Shakespearean comedies and tragedies, it was left to a Sanskrit College pundit to direct dramatic composition to two of the most shameful social problems. Rāmnārāyaṇ Tarkaratna's (1822-1886) *Kulīn Kulasarvasva* (The Top-ranking Brahman All For Prestige) published in 1854, was the first dramatic composition directed against the social backwardness of the better class of the brahman caste. Social satire had been, from the close of the previous century, the most popular item in the indigenous Yātrā and Pāñcālī performances, featuring also in the satirical sketches of Bhavānicaraṇ Banerji and in the poems of Īśvarcandra Gupta. Tarkaratna's work is indeed not much more than a series of satirical pictures of social customs and rituals that seemed silly or pernicious in the new light of the day. It is not a drama proper but to Tarkaratna's credit it must be said that he was the first to create farce out of purely indigenous material.

Kulīn Kulasarvasva was written in response to a notice announcing a reward of rupees fifty only for writing a dramatic work on the evils of the marriage system of the Kulīn brahmans. It can hardly be called a farce proper as the episodes are very loosely knit without much of a central story. Influence of Bhāratcandra is patent in the verse portions. It was, however, a stage success for some time.

Tarkaratna's *Navanāṭak* (New Drama), published in 1866, is an elaborate and more pretentious work. It was written for the private theatre maintained by the nephews of Devendranath Tagore and was successfully staged. The tragic ending of the plot is after the *finale* of *Nīl-darpaṇ* by Dīnabandhu Mitra. A running didactive note disturbs the dramatic interest. The plot is trivial and centres round

the persecution of the senior wife and son of a rich zamindar by his junior and favourite wife. Rāmnārāyaṇ's other dramatic works comprise adaptations of four Sanskrit plays: *Veṇīsaṃhāra* (1858), *Ratnāvalī* (1858), *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (1860) and *Mālatīmādhava* (1867); three plays on Purāṇa stories: *Rukmiṇīharaṇ* (1871), *Kaṃsavadh* (1875) and *Dharmavijay* (1875), one on a folk-tale: *Svapnadhan* (1875); and three (or four) farces published anonymously.[1] Among the numerous works that went by the name of drama and were written on the evils of polygamy and early marriage, two are worth mention: *Sapatnīnāṭak* (1858) by Tārakcandra Cūḍāmaṇi, and *Sambandhasamādhi* (1867) by an anonymous author who was probably no other than Tarkaratna.

Widow remarriage was the most popular subject on which scores of books and pamphlets called drama were written. The first man to write in support of the Widow Remarriage Act was Woomesh Chandra Mitra. His *Vidhavāvivāha Nāṭak* (1856), inspired by Vidyasagar's treatise on the shastric sanction for widow remarriage, became quite successful on the stage. In spite of the dreary soliloquies and a few vulgar touches of the *Vidyāsundar* sort the story as unfolded is not devoid of dramatic effect and conviction. The author's claim that it 'is the first attempt made to introduce regular tragedy into Bengallee drama' is not unfounded, in spite of *Kīrttivilās* (1852).

Mitra was an admirer of the works of Vidyasagar, and this is shown by his only other dramatic composition which is a dramatic version (1865) of Vidyasagar's prose narrative on the exile of Sītā. Mitra organized a Yātrā party in south Calcutta where the Yātrā version of his *Sītār Vanavās* was repeatedly performed with uniform success. His *Vidhavāvivāha Nāṭak* was also a stage success.

The success of Mitra's play on widow remarriage was

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[1] These are generally ascribed to Maharaja Jatindramohan Tagore, one of the best patrons of Tarkaratna.

responsible for the first modern drama written in Assamese. Guṇābhirām Baruā's *Rāmanavamī Nāṭak,* written in 1857 and published first in instalments in a monthly magazine (*Aruṇoday*) and much later (1870) in book form, was directly inspired by Mitra's play. Another play written in support of widow remarriage needs mention. It is *Vidhavāviraha Nāṭak* (Bereavement of a Widow), published in 1859 and written by Samuel Pir Bakhsh, a Muslim who had adopted the Christian faith. The plot, apparently based on fact, is vulgar but realistic.

The orthodox opposition to widow remarriage was not silent. But their attempts in the dramatic field were a total misfire. None of their work is worth mentioning.

Impressed by the brilliant stage show (July 1858) of Tarkaratna's version of the Sanskrit comedy *Ratnāvalī,* Michael Madhusudan Dutt who was soon destined to inaugurate modern Bengali poetry was prompted to try his hand at dramatic composition. Before that he had written only English verse. His *Śarmiṣṭhā* (1858) was written for and brilliantly staged (1859) as a private performance at the north-suburban garden house of the two raja brothers of Paikpara, Iswar Chandra and Pratap Chandra Sinha. It was by far the best play that had yet been written in Bengali. The plot was taken from a story in the First Book of the *Mahābhārata.* The treatment was more after Kālidāsa than after the western dramatists, but the author did not follow faithfully the dicta of Sanskrit dramaturgy. The play was translated into English by the author himself for the use of the high British officials who witnessed the show. In the 'Advertisement' of *Sermista* (as the English translation by the author is entitled), published in 1859, Dutt claims that the original 'is the first attempt in the Bengali language to produce a classical and regular drama'.

Śarmiṣṭhā was followed by *Padmāvatī* (written in 1859, published in 1860). The story is an Indianized version of the story of the golden apple from Greek mythology. It is

not exclusively in prose as *Śarmiṣṭhā* was ; there are passages in unrhymed verse which is its first occurrence in Bengali. As a play *Padmāvatī* shows no improvement. But had Dutt been daring enough to use unrhymed verse throughout it would have been a success. The play does not appear to have been staged before the establishment of the public theatre in December 1872.

Dutt's third drama *Kṛṣṇakumarī* (1861 for private circulation, 1865 for public sale) was written in a month (August 6 to September 7, 1860). The story is taken from Tod's *Rajasthan* which since the publication of Raṅgalāl Banerji's *Padminī* (1858) had become almost a scripture to the nationalistically self-conscious educated young men of Bengal. The treatment of the plot followed the pattern of the Greek tragedy[2] with a marked influence of Shakespeare. The attempt was certainly bold, and the play was superior to anything of the *genre* yet produced in Bengali. The play is written entirely in prose. There are however some songs. The rising spirit of nationalism is echoed in the soliloquy of the father of the heroine. *Kṛṣṇakumārī* was very successfully staged by the Jorasanko Theatre, a private stage organized by the nephews and sons of Devendranath Tagore and their friends (1865).

Dutt's next play *Māyākānan* (Enchanted Forest) was written long afterwards (when the poet had come to the end of his tether) for one of the public theatres. It was published posthumously in January and staged for the first time on April 18, 1874. The story is romantic and depressingly tragic, reflecting perhaps the frustrations of the life of the author. Characterization, however, is good.

Soon after the successful performance of *Śarmiṣṭhā*, when *Padmāvatī* was hardly finished, Dutt was impelled to write two farces satirizing respectively the two leading evils

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[2] There are faint but unmistakable traces of the influence of Euripides' *Iphigeneia*. The author projected an English translation or adaptation entitled *The Flower of Rajasthan*.

of the day: the drunken stupidity of the half-educated young rich and the adulterous hypocrisy of the pious-looking old. Both plays were published in 1859. The first was entitled *Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyatā* (Is This What Is Called Culture?) and the second *Buḍa Sāliker Ghāḍe Rom* (*The Silvered Rake*—literally, 'The Old Myna Growing Downs on Its Neck'). They are excellent satires, will written and incisive. They are among the best farces in Bengali and have influenced almost all the subsequent productions of the type. *Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyatā* was staged in 1865 by the Jorasanko Theatre and by the Sabhabazar Theatre[3] where *Kṛṣṇakumārī* too was staged. The stage success of the farce made the apparent targets of the fire of the other farce sit up and look out. In consequence the private theatres did not feel any enthusiasm for staging *The Silvered Rake*. That was done only after the public stage had been established.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote in English a dramatic poem called *Rizia*: *Empress of Ind*. The theme is taken from Indian history of the thirteenth century. It was written when Dutt was in Madras (1848-56) but was never published. He had intended to re-write the play in Bengali after the publication of *Kṛṣṇakumārī*. So he wrote to a friend on September 1, 1860: 'I am quite ready to undertake another drama, but this must be acted first. We ought to take up Indo-Mussalman subjects. The Mohammedans are a fiercer race than ourselves, and would afford splendid opportunity for the display of passion. Their women are more cut out for intrigue than ours.... After this, we must look to *Rizia*. I hope that will be a drama after your own heart. The prejudice against Moslem names must be given up.'

Dutt translated three Bengali plays into English: Tarkaratna's *Ratnāvalī* (1858), his own *Śarmiṣṭhā* (1859) and Dīnabandhu Mitra's *Nīl-darpaṇ* or *The Mirror of Indigo-Planting* (1860). The last was published anonymously by

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[3] Organized by the members of the Deb family established by Raja Nabakrishna, the munshi of Warren Hastings.

the Rev. J. Long. Dutt had also intended to translate Woomesh Chandra Mitra's *Vidhavāvivāha Nāṭak*.

Dīnabandhu Mitra (1829-74), a student of the Hooghly College and an officer in the Postal Department, infused new enthusiasm in play-writing by drawing the flagging attention of the larger number of the reading and the very restricted number of the stage-going public from the social vices of the city-dwelling upper class to the economic exploitation of the dumb rural masses. Indigo cultivation was then the most important industry in Bengal and was entirely controlled by British interests. The masters of the plantations and attached factories were Britishers with little education and less sympathy. With the passive indulgence of some of the administrative officers of the government or encouraged by their indifference, the indigo planters did what they liked to the peasantry. Dīnabandhu Mitra's native place Jessore was one of the worst affected regions, and he had good information as well as his own experience. He wrote his first play *Nīl-darpaṇ* (Dacca 1860) giving a grim picture of inhuman villainy and torture. As a dramatic composition its defects are manifold and patent but as a gripping stage play it was effective, and it went a long way towards the supression of the evil. The characters are generally vivid and natural, being taken directly from life. For its propaganda value *Nīl-darpaṇ* belongs to the same class of effective books as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Oliver Twist*.

Mitra's second play *Navīn-tapasvinī* (The Young Woman Recluse, Krishnagar 1863) comprises two thinly connected plots, one a farcial story partly adapted from *Merry Wives of Windsor* and the other based on an indigenous folk-tale. Characterization is mechanical, and the style artificial. The third play *Sadhavār Ekādaśī* (Forced Widowhood of a Married Girl, 1866) is the best work of Mitra and one of the best plays in the language, although its defects are obvious. It is caricaturistic rather than satirical, and the plot was partly modelled after Dutt's farce on the drunkenness and profligacy of the

English-educated young men. The central character of Nimchand Dutt has relieved the plot from triteness and has raised the play from a mere farce to a tragedy. The character is admirably conceived and brilliantly delineated, being partly modelled after the scholar and poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

Mitra's other dramatic works are either farces or farce-ridden light comedies and include *Biye-Pāgla Buḍo* (Old Man Mad for Marriage, 1866),[4] *Līlāvatī* (1867), *Jāmāi-Bārik* (The Barrack for Sons-in-law, 1872)[5] and *Kamale-Kāminī* (1873). The last named play was based partly on an historical anecdote of Cachar.

Dīnabandhu Mitra's works made little contribution to the development of the Bengali drama but as stage plays they were unqualified successes in the early days of the public theatre. As a matter of fact the public theatre opened (December 1872) with Mitra's plays and for some time had to depend mainly on his plays for the box-office returns. Mitra's plays abound in low comedy and light humour (often verging on the vulgar) that were more acceptable to the stage-going public than were subtle characterization and dramatic suspense. By the end of the century the taste of the stage audience had changed and Mitra's plays could no longer be staged without considerable expunction.

It is no wonder that Manomohan Basu (1831-1912), a literary disciple of Īśvarcandra Gupta and writer of Kabi songs, should introduce stage plays on popular mythological stories with an undercurrent of devotion (*bhakti*). It was by him and thus that the course of Bengali drama was diverted towards the old Yātrā, and the new Yātrā was born. Long speeches and soliloquies indicate the influence of the old style of popular devotional entertainment ('Kathakatā'). There was also a preponderance of songs. There is little

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[4] The plot is based on fact.

[5] Some of the author's friends and contemporary celebrities have been mildly satirized in some minor characters or are mentioned casually.

ingenuity in the development of the plot, and the style is heavy and old fashioned.

Basu's first attempt was *Rāmābhiṣek* (Enthronement of Rāma, 1867), the first Bengali original play to be written on the story of Rāma. It is mostly in prose. His second play *Praṇayparīkṣā* (Test of Love, 1869) is based on a bookish romantic story showing the evils of polygamy. It is influenced by Tarkaratna's *Navanāṭak,* but it does not end in tragedy. The plot could have been treated better in a novel. The third play, *Satī Nāṭak* (1873), is the best known of Basu's works. It deals with the puranic story of Śiva and Satī and is the only play with a tragic ending the author ever wrote. In the second edition (1877) the playwright had to bow to orthodox criticism and so to add a final act showing the union of Śiva with Satī incarnated as the daughter of Himālaya. An important new feature in *Satī Nāṭak* is the role of the mad fellow Śāntirām, mad in appearance and behaviour but a saint at heart. Two decades later Girish Chandra Ghosh won popularity on the stage by centring the plots of his religious plays on such saintly characters in disguise.

His fourth play which treated the puranic story of Hariścandra (1875) leaned more frankly towards the Yātrā which by now had practically become theatrical play without a proper stage, with an abundance of songs and long speeches. The newly awakened spirit of nationalism found echo in the play. In the remaining five plays—four on puranic themes and one (1875) a satire on a local religious institution—there is nothing that is remarkable. They are Yātrā pieces rather than stage plays. Basu's last play *Satīr Abhimān* (published in 1910-11 serially in a magazine devoted to the stage) narrates in prose and verse the story of Sītā's entry into the bowels of the earth.

The Bowbazar Theatre, a private amateur theatrical party, like all its contemporaries, started with the performance of Basu's *Rāmābhiṣek* in early 1868. *Satī Nāṭak* also was repeatedly staged with great success. The theatre was

closed down soon after the staging of *Hariścandra Nāṭak* in early 1875. Basu's plays were not deemed suitable for the public theatre in its early days, and with the solitary exception of *Praṇayparīkṣa* (staged at the Great National Theatre on January 17, 1874) there is no record of successful public performance of them.

17

FORERUNNERS OF THE NEW POETRY

ENGLISH education opened up the panoramic vista of English literature and through it, of European classical literature as well. It started with the establishment of Hindu College in Calcutta (1817) to be followed not much later by the establishment of Colleges at Hooghly and Krishnagar and some other towns. For some decades the number of persons receiving English education in the Calcutta and outside colleges was not large, but their influence based on academic prestige was not small. Social reform, or rather fight against petty orthodoxy, claimed their best attention, and in spite of their liking for their own literature they did not feel much enthusiasm for cultivating it as they knew that writing in English was sure to bring much greater kudos. The first Bengalee to write English verse was Kasiprasad Ghose (d. 1873), one of the first alumni of Hindu College. His verses were first published in *Hurkaru,* one of the best-circulated English dailies in Calcutta, and then brought out in an anthology *The Shair and the Other Poems* (1830). Bhāratcandra was still looked upon as the greatest poet in Bengali and Ghose paid his modicum of compliment to the poet of *Vidyāsundar* by translating portions of it into English verse. K. M. Banerji's *The Persecuted* (1831) was the first play written by a Bengalee in English. The best equipped but the worst affected among the seekers of poetic fame through English was Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the future initiator of the new poetry, who turned to his mother tongue partly by accident and partly in a spirit of bravado. The father of Bengali fiction, Bankimchandra Chatterji, wrote one of his first novels (*Rajmohan's Wife,* published serially in the *Indian Field,* 1864) also in English.

It was through translation that contemporary Bengali literature first made contact with English. It was still the heyday of Bhāratcandra and his school of 'vile poetry' as

Dutt called it. So the first books to be rendered into Bengali verse were *Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1831) and *Persian Tales* (1834), to be followed by *Gay's Fables* (1836). Next come the prose translation of Johnson's *Rasselas* (before 1840) and of *Arabian Nights* (1838), not to mention the various textbooks and some Christian classics and tracts. English poetry in translation did not appear before the fifties of the century when the first few cantos of *Paradise Lost* were published anonymously in 1854. But such translations were unacceptable to the general public and unnecessary to the English-educated reader.

Towards the close of the thirties of the nineteenth century (to be precise, in 1838) Persian was replaced by Bengali as the language of the law and the revenue courts. This gave an unexpected impetus to the cultivation of literary Bengali which led to the development of the standard literary prose. Poetry was naturally neglected and it was left to the writers of songs, satires and amorous tales to write verse. In the twenties of the century Rādhāmohan Sen was unanimously hailed as the topmost contemporary poet as Nidhu Bābu was in the past generation. Sen knew Persian and Sanskrit. He wrote songs. But his achievement was indeed poor. He produced also a treatise on classical music (1818), translated an eighteenth century Sanskrit work (1826) and commented on the poem of Bhāratcandra (1833), all written in verse. Kasiprasad Ghose, the first Bengali writer of English verse, also wrote a number of songs in Bengali.

Amorous romantic tales in verse on the model of *Vidyāsundar* and similar tales were printed for the consumption of the less educated townfolk. The best known writer of this class was Madanmohan Tarkālaṅkār (1815-57), a good pundit who became later a protagonist of social reform. His *Vāsavadattā* is an adaptation of the Sanskrit prose romance of the same title. It was written when he was still a student at Sanskrit College (1836). His earlier work *Rasataraṅgiṇī*

(Stream of Sweetness) is a metrical translation of some of the very well-known erotic verses in Sanskrit.

The credit of clearing the ground for the appearance of the new poetry goes to a poet who had turned a journalist. Īśvarcandra Gupta (1812-59) dominated Bengali literature from the middle thirties to the late fifties of the century and bridged the gulf between the old poetry and the new. It was left to one of his best assistants, Raṅgalāl Banerji, to write the first long poem that did not conform to the known models of poetry. Gupta wrote fearful prose, but his verse is often delightfully simple. Some of his poems are openly didactic and some are redolent of nostalgia for the vanishing customs and traditions. Quite a number of them are either satires on the foreign ways of the English-educated or are attacks on the zeal of the social reformer. Sarcasm and wit were his strong points. His vocabulary included native words that had been considered inelegant for literary use, and his metrical skill was not inconsiderable. Gupta was a lover of the late eighteenth century poems and songs that were fashionable in the Calcutta region—of Bhāratcandra, Rāmprasād and the 'Kabiwallas'—and this love conditioned his main literary activities. Gupta's enthusiasm for his predecessors' poetry brought to light a mass of unknown material regarding these authors. Gupta knew some English but many of his literary pupils possessed a sound knowledge of the English language and literature. It was really by their help that he was able to follow English poetry in some of his didactic poems.

Gupta was the editor of the weekly (later also daily) paper *Saṃvādprabhākar* (The Sun of Information) and almost all of his writings had first appeared in its pages. His major works include a translation (in part) of *Hitopadeśa* in prose and verse and a translation (1857) of the allegorical drama *Prabodhacandrodaya.* Gupta intended the latter for stage performance and so he inserted some original verses and songs. As a play the work was hopeless but the original verses and

songs appearing in it are among the best that Gupta ever wrote.

Gupta actively encouraged writing of verse by the school and college students, and he was always ready to publish their attempts in his paper. Among these neophytes were some of the best writers of the sixties and seventies of the century, viz. Raṅgalāl Banerji, Dīnabandhu Mitra and Bankimchandra Chatterji. With the exception of Banerji the young aspirants to poetic fame produced only mechanical verses as they lacked both the equipment and the inspiration of their master. However superficial and prejudiced the critical mind of Īśvaracandra Gupta was, he was not fully appreciated by his young pupils even at his best.

Raṅgalāl Banerji (1826-86) was not only a literary pupil of Gupta but also a collaborator of his in his journalistic activity. Banerji, like Gupta, was almost entirely self-educated, but the range of his education was wider. His knowledge of English literature was good and of Sanskrit was sound. He also possessed an active interest in ancient Indian history and archaeology. Rājendralāl Mitra had received much assistance from him when he wrote his tomes on Orissan architecture. When as a government servant he was posted in Orissa he read Oriya and wrote articles in Bengali on Oriya literature, and thus he was the first to introduce Oriya poetry to the outside world. One of his own poems was based on an anecdote from the traditional history of Orissa. In the early days of his literary career Banerji like his master was a staunch protagonist of Bengali literature. In reply to an unfavourable estimate of Bengali literature made in a paper read at the Bethune Society, Banerji wrote a long essay also read at the Society and subsequently published in book form (1852). Six years later, in the preface of his metrical translation of the mock heroic *Batrachomuomakia,* Banerji appears to have modified his views and he makes a strong plea for adopting European poetry into Bengali.

Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan* was avidly read by the educated Bengali as it vicariously supplied some solace to their wounded vanity, since India was under the subjugation of the British and the Bengali people had no opening for a military career. The Muslim rulers of the bygone centuries were the targets of attack in Indian history then known and so the educated Bengalee was content to put all blame on them. The misfire of the Sepoy Mutiny increased the prestige of the British and lowered still further the prestige of the old Muslim rulers. This is why the sentimental outbursts of patriotic enthusiasm were directed against these Muslim rulers who were known to have been markedly antagonistic to the Hindus. Nevertheless it will be wrong to think that the poets had any special motive for the antagonism against their Muslim neighbours. In the phraseology of contemporary literature the Muslim is the symbolical target for the futile frettings of a subject race coming slowly to self-consciousness.

Banerji's *Padminī Upākhyān* (Story of Padmini, 1858) was the first Bengali narrative romance of the new pattern, and it was also the first poem with a twisted outlook of patriotism. Banerji possibly took his cue from Michael Madhusudan Dutt's English poem *Captive Ladie* (Madras 1848). The theme is the rape of Chitor by Ālāuddin, Sultan of Delhi, as narrated by Tod. The prologue imitates Scott's romances: the tale is told by a bard well posted in the local lore to an itinerant young man. The poem is entirely narrative, and the form is markedly different from the traditional romance. There are a few lines and passages paraphrased from English poets such as Thomas Moore, Shakespeare and Byron. The metre is mainly the traditional Payār and Tripadī but there is also an attempt at innovation by extending the Payār line of verse beyond the fourteen syllables.

When Banerji's second narrative poem *Karmadevī* (1862) came out Michael Madhusudan Dutt had already

come out as an outstanding poet with his two attempts in 'epic' poetry written in free (and unrhyming) Payār verse. But there is no evidence of Dutt's influence in Banerji's poetry except in the division of the poem into Cantos (there was no such division in *Padminī*) and in a few insignificant stylistic mannerisms which probably indicate Dutt's perfunctory revision. (The two were friends from their boyhood days as their families were neighbours at Kidderpore in Calcutta.) The story of *Karmadevī* as well as that of the next poem *Śūrasundarī* (The Brave Beauty, 1868) was taken from Rajput history. *Karmadevī* is more descriptive and narrative than *Padminī* and also gives a clearer idea of the author's patriotic ideal. He has been unequivocal in his condemnation of the pervading spirit of petty jealousy and the absence of manliness in any sphere of activity of the Bengali people.

> There is a complete lack of mutual amity in Hindusthan: Nobody cares for his race, family or friend. Accumulation of small riches swells the head: It is difficult to ascertain the really rich from the lesser.
> The men of Bengal are not manly ; they are fond of fun and amusements preferred by women. How can a boy take to the manly path when as a child his pet doll is an old man smoking his hukka? The people of the West want the fruits of manliness, and see about the toys of their children.

Śūrasundarī marks a distinct fall of the poet's power, but the next poem, written some ten years later, *Kāñcī-Kāverī* (1879), shows some rallying. The story is taken from an old Oriya poem by Puruṣottamdās, recounting one of the best romantic tales from the history of Orissa. The interesting historical background and the undercurrent of religious devotion is a relief from the monotony of unreal heroism and inarticulate patriotism of Banerji's earlier poems. The style is smooth. The story is outlined below.

Kapilendra the king of Orissa had a score of sons of

whom the youngest and the best, Puruṣottam, was born of one of his concubines. Instructed in a dream oracle by Jagannath, the presiding deity of Orissa, the king declared Puruṣottam as his heir-apparent. The elder and legitimate sons revolted but Puruṣottam quelled them, and they were compelled to leave Orissa. The old king died and Puruṣottam succeeded him. Marriage was arranged between him and Princess Padmāvatī of Kāñcī. The king of Kāñcī came to Puri to have a talk with the son-in-law elect. It was the day of the Car Festival. When the car of Jagannath is on the move the king of Orissa takes a broomstick of gold and clears the road of dirt and dust. It was a very old custom signifying that the king of Orissa was but a humble servant of Jagannath. But the king of Kāñcī failed to see the significance of the custom and did not like that a man who has to do street cleaning of a sort should marry his daughter. He broke the engagement and went away. Puruṣottam felt humiliated and vowed before Jagannath that within three years three months and three days he would subjugate the king of Kāñcī and would give his daughter in marriage to a scavenger. With an inadequate army Puruṣottam marched against Kāñcī. In the fight that ensued the king of Orissa would have been beaten but for the help rendered by Jagannath and his brother Balarām (the other deity at Puri) who in guise of horsemen riding a black and a white horse respectively fought for Puruṣottam and won the battle for him. The king returned to his capital with Padmāvatī and the image of Gaṇeśa that was the patron deity of the royal house of Kāñcī.

Puruṣottam was ready to give away Padmāvatī to a very lowcaste street-cleaner but the cleverness of his minister came to the rescue. He pleaded with the king to postpone the marriage and the king was not unwilling as he had by this time fallen in love with the princess. The day of the Car Festival came and the king was out with his broomstick when the minister appeared with Padmāvatī and placed her right

hand on the left hand of the king. For the time being the king was a lowclass street-çleaner and the vow was not violated.

Banerji made a metrical rendering of Kālidāsa's *Kumāra-sambhava* (1872) and translated some two hundred and odd verses of Sanskrit anonymous (*udbhaṭa*) verses.

Raṅgalāl Banerji's main shortcoming as the first writer of the new verse is that he failed to build up a diction for it. The contrivances of the old poetry were worn thin and its expressions had become trite and almost meaningless. Banerji could not set up his own idiom nor could he inject new content into old words or add fresh nuances to old expressions. He had imagination but his style was old-fashioned and affected.

One of Banerji's brothers, Gaṇeścandra (d. 1866), also wrote poetry, some of which was published in Gupta's paper. His later poetry shows influence of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's odes on the lore of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

18

MICHAEL MADHUSŪDAN DUTT AND HIS FOLLOWERS

MICHAEL MADHUSŪDAN DUTT (1824-1873), or simply Madhusudan Datta as he was known before his conversion to Christianity, was the son of a successful lawyer practising in Calcutta. Being the only surviving child he was pampered by a fond mother and a fonder father. Like many boys of the middle class families Dutt had his first lessons in his mother tongue and in Persian and was admitted into an English school at Kidderpore, the south-western subarb of Calcutta, where the family had their town residence. In 1837 he left the Kidderpore school and entered Hindu College which he left in February 1843 (when he was reading in the second class of the senior department) to adopt Christianity. Dutt was one of the most brilliant students of his class and perhaps the best English scholar of his college. D. L. Richardson was very fond of his pupil who was even then writing verses in English and publishing them in the various periodicals of Calcutta. Richardson's influence on the high-strung and impressionable boy was profound and on the whole it was not conducive to his good.

Dutt's love for English poetry, however, was not caused so much by external influence as by his inordinate desire to be a pucca sahib, and this was one of the main causes of his failure in life. The encomium that he received for his college-day English writings went to his head. He lived in a dream-world of glory he expected to attain some day as an English poet recognized in England. In his poems he was constantly sighing,

> To cross the vast Atlantic wave
> For glory, or a nameless grave.

In the sonnet on his college friends Dutt meant himself when he said:

Perchance, unmark'd some here are budding now,
Whose temples shall with laureate-wreaths be crown'd,
Twined by the Sisters Nine: whose angel-tongues
Shall charm the world with their enchanting songs.
And time shall waft the echo of each sound
To distant ages. . . . .

In October 1842 the young votary of Poetry sent for publication some of his verses to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine* with the following dedication: 'These poems are most respectfully dedicated to William Wordsworth Esqr ; the poet, by a foreign admirer of his genius—the author.' But nothing is known about the fate of these poems. In February 1843 Dutt left college and home to adopt Christianity in the teeth of the stiffest opposition from his family, friends and community. The father could not altogether forsake his only child, and he continued to pay for his son's studies at Bishop's College which Dutt joined as a Christian student in the secular department. Here he remained till early 1848 and read besides English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian and Sanskrit. While a student in Bishop's College Dutt translated some Persian poems into English verse. When his father stopped his allowance Dutt left the college, and in the company of some South Indian fellow-students went to Madras to seek his fortune. The Christian community in Madras helped him in securing the post of an English teacher at the school attached to the Madras Male Orphan Asylum. Before the year was over Dutt married an Anglo-Indian girl of English extraction, the daughter of a Nilgiri tea planter, and settled down to write English verse in real earnest. Some of these poems were published in *Madras Circular, Spectator* and *Atheneum* under the pen-name of 'Timothy Penpoem'. For some time he was on the editorial staff of *Atheneum* and of *Spectator* and for a few weeks edited *Hindu Chronicle*. In 1852 we find Dutt as the Second Tutor in the High School department

of 'the Madras University'—the central educational institution in Madras. This post he held till his return to Calcutta in 1856.

In December 1848 Dutt published his best and biggest poem in English *The Captive Ladie,* to which was appended *Visions of the Past,* a fragment in blank verse. The theme of *The Captive Ladie* is the suicidal rivalry between the king of Kanauj and the king of Delhi, which made it easy for Muhammad Ghori to occupy Delhi in the late twelfth century. The poem cannot be called an historical poem as there is little of history. But it was the first poem by an Indian writer dealing, though indirectly, with the Muslim conquest of India. The heroine was modelled after Sītā in exile.

The lukewarm reception of *The Captive Ladie* in Calcutta damped Dutt's enthusiasm and he had not the heart to complete the poems he had begun to write after its publication. That his thoughts were already turning to Bengali poetry we know from his letter written on August 18, 1849 to his close friend from school days, Gaurdas Bysack: 'Perhaps you do not know that I devote several hours daily to Tamil. My life is more busy than that of a school boy. Here is my routine: 6—8 Hebrew, 8—12 School, 12—2 Greek, 2—5 Telegu, and Sanskrit, 5—7 Latin, 7—10 English. Am I not preparing for the great object of embellishing the tongue of my fathers?'

Dutt's father died in 1855, three years after the death of his mother, and he had soon to return to Calcutta to take possession of the goodly property left by his father. In the same year he divorced his first wife and married Henrietta, the daughter of a teacher of French extraction. The second marriage was completely successful.

Dutt returned to Calcutta on 2nd February 1856. His friends helped him to secure the job of the Police Court Head Clerk from which he was soon promoted to the office of the Police Court Interpreter. From now on to the middle of

1862, when he left for England, was the happiest, best and most fruitful period of Dutt's life. He was earning a comfortable salary; he was living in a commodious house (6 Lower Chitpur Road)[1] which was just opposite to his office, and he was working like a Titan, writing plays and poems that revolutionized Bengali literature. He was also preparing himself for the Bar.

Recovery of his paternal property from adverse possession was not easy. It involved litigation, expenditure and vexation. But Vidyasagar came to his help and made arrangements for the sale of the property at a fair price to be paid in instalments. With the assurance of adequate financial resourses the poet left for England on board the steamship *Candia* on June 9, 1862. His wife and children remained in Calcutta. Dutt joined Gray's Inn, but his extravagance, made worse by irregular remittance from home, seriously interfered with his law studies, and he had to move to Paris by the middle of the next year. Before that his wife and children had come over from India. Life in Paris was a nightmare and Dutt with his family came to Versailles where he would have surely gone under, had Vidyasagar's generosity not come to his rescue.

How much Dutt suffered for want of money in Europe can be inferred from the postscript to a letter he wrote to Vidyasagar from London on June 18, 1866: 'I tell my wife that when I get back to Calcutta you will give me a little room in your house and a lot of rice to keep body and soul together.' He returned to London by the end of 1865 and completed his terms. He was called to the Bar in November 1866 and returned to Calcutta in February and joined the High Court Bar.

For the making of the poet's mind his five years' stay in Europe had not been entirely wasted, though he had little opportunity and less inclination to profit by it. His

[1] All his Bengali works except one were written when Dutt was occupying this house. *Bīrāṅganā* was written at Kidderpore.

knowledge of French was refreshed and he added Italian and German to his stock. On January 9, 1865, he wrote to Vidyasagar from Versailles: 'I am making the very best use of my unfortunate exile and I think I may, without vanity, say that I know more languages than any Bengali now living.' In Versailles, Dutt wrote sonnets in Bengali which practically closed his literary career.

From 1866 till his death on June 29, 1873, Dutt's life is a progression in frustration, decline and decay. The only works he produced in this time were a few children's verses, a romantic tragedy and a prose adaptation of the *Iliad,* entitled *Hekṭarvadh.*

Dutt's first appearance as a writer of Bengali happened with the drama as we have discussed. This was, however, not an accident as is generally supposed. In Madras, Dutt had tried his hand at drama by writing a dramatic poem in English, *Rizzia,* which however was never published. That he was preparing his pen for Bengali poetry as early as 1849 is known from a letter we have previously cited. Some months before he started writing in Bengali he was renewing his acquaintance of Kālidāsa, his favourite Indian poet, with the help of a pundit. The influence of the old master is very palpable in his early writings. In *Śarmiṣṭhā* there are some brief paraphrases from Kālidāsa, besides other evidences of indebtedness. The title of his first Bengali heroic poem *Tilottamāsambhav* is after Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava.* In a letter to a friend the poet confessed that 'the erotic character of some of the allusions' perhaps owed to 'a partiality for Kalidasa.'

Dutt's writing of Bengali poetry began by experimenting in ridding the Payār of the rhyme as well as of the verse-end pause. In the Payār with its verse-line of fourteen syllables divided into four feet of four, four, four and two syllables (there being cæsura at the end of the second foot)—rhythm and sense end perforce with verse line, and the two verse lines must rhyme and form a couplet. This was a cramp on

freedom of expression and on natural flow of words. Dutt did away with rhyme (thereby splitting the cohesion of the verse lines) and placed the final pause anywhere, in the first, second, third or the final syllable. This was the 'emancipation' of the Bengali verse that was achieved by Dutt. He gave it the name '*Amitrākṣar chanda*' (the unrhyming metre). He used it hesitatingly, for the first time, in a few occasional lines in his second play *Padmāvatī*. His first Bengali poem *Tilottamāsambhav* (1860) as well as the mature poems, *Meghanādvadh*, *Birāṅganā* and the Sonnets are written entirely in this free Payār.

The first poem, called an 'epicling' by the author, is in four cantos, the first two of which first appeared in *Vividhārthasaṅgraha* of Rājendralāl Mitra, a college friend of the poet and one of the first and foremost champions of Dutt's poetry. The story, taken from Hindu mythology, is meagre. Two demon brothers Sunda and Upasanda waxed so powerful that the supremacy of the gods was threatened. As a possible remedy the Creator collected together the essences of all beautiful things in Creation and fashioned out of them the girl Tilottamā, the most enchanting woman that was ever seen. She was sent to the brothers and they both fell in love with her and each wanted to possess her for himself. A quarrel followed which resulted in a mortal duel. When both were dead Tilottamā turned into a star and retired to the solar region.

The poet introduced into the story some new characters, all minor gods. Some of them are folk-deities of Bengal and the others are Greek goddesses somewhat thinly disguised. The goddesses of Devotion (*Bhakti*) and Worship (*Ārādhanā*) are the poet's creations. The Creator (*Brahmā*) sometimes reflects the personality of Zeus. The influence of Homer is always there but the Indian note is predominant. Hellenisms in expression are not numerous; a notable instance is the epithet 'white-armed' (*śvetabhujā*) applied to the goddess of Poesy. It is a translation of Homeric *leukolenos* applied

to Herē, Hellenē and Andromakhē, the three heroines of the *Iliad*.

Dutt attempted an English translation of his *Tilottamā* but it never progressed beyond the first few lines.

In the next poem (also mentioned by the author in a letter to a friend as an 'epicling') the tragic story of Rāvaṇa and his heroic son Indrajit (Vanquisher of Indra) also called Meghanād (Thunder-Voiced), was taken up. Dutt had a predilection for strong, mighty and wilfully violent figures of Indian mythology, for they approximated to his own character. This is why the heroine of his first play was an Asura girl and the heroes of his 'epiclings' were Asuras and Rākṣasas respectively. The story of Rāma he knew mainly from the old Bengali poet Kṛttivās whom he had read avidly in his early boyhood days. The good-natured hero of the old Bengali poet never impressed him; his preferences were for the dashing Rākṣasas. So when Dutt selected the seige and fall of Laṅkā as the theme of his second 'heroic' poem (possibly for the reason of its resemblance to the fall of Troy) he naturally chose Rāvaṇ and Meghanād as his heroes. (He preferred the unusual 'Meghanād' to the proper and usual 'Indrajit' as it was more sonorous with its two long vowels.) Dutt felt a kind of vague affinity between the indomitable spirit of the king of Laṅkā and the restless, reckless and ambitious urges of his own heart; like his Rākṣasa hero he also was a proud though outwardly quiet and lonely man. He wrote to a friend that the idea of Rāvaṇ elevated and kindled his imagination. Born and brought up in the tradition of a middle class Hindu home Dutt was not expected to have irreverence for Rāma. Nor had he really, in spite of renunciation of his ancestral faith. Rāma's victory over the Rākṣasas was however not to his liking, since Rāma commanded an army of monkeys and he was led to victory by the treachery of Rāvaṇ's brother. So he wrote to a friend when he was occupied in writing the second part of the poem: 'He [i.e. Rāvaṇ] was a noble

fellow, and but for that scoundrel Bivishan, would have licked the monkey army into the sea.'

Meghanādvadh (Fall of Meghanād) came out of the press in 1861 in two parts published a few months apart. The poem is divided into nine cantos, following the dictum of the Sanskrit rhetoricians that an 'epic' (*mahākāvya*) must contain more than eight cantos. The poet had contemplated writing a heroic poem and had begun on a high note in a grand overture, but the note could not be kept up for long and the grandeur could not be maintained throughout. The genius of the poet was rebellious rather than strenuous, and the lyrical tendency could not be continually suppressed. As a result lapses to lyricism became more and more frequent as the story progressed. The poem was written not continuously but by fits of enthusiasm and inspiration, so that the quality is not uniform and a proper balance between the episodes and incidents is not always maintained.

In spite of these defects *Meghnādvadh* is the most significant work of Dutt. The free Payār is now smoothly flowing; the pattern of the vocables is clear cut, and characterization individualistic. The European technique—that is of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso and Milton—predominated, and Hellenism in characterization and expression is neither inconspicuous nor frequent. At the same time the technicalities of the Indian rhetoricians were not avoided, and on the whole the Indian atmosphere has not been violently interfered with. The poet has succeeded in moulding the heroes of the most popular epic tale of India according to the spirit of his age. The tragedy of Rāvaṇ and Meghanād breathes the spirit of the poet as much as that of the nation that was just waking up to a sense of lost liberty and vanished glory.

The next poem in the free Payār verse, *Bīrāṅganā* (Valiant Ladies, 1862) is entirely lyrical in spite of its title. The diction is smooth, and the versification mellifluous. It comprises twenty-one epistles by as many notable ladies from

mythology and epic lore, written to their husbands or lovers. Dutt followed here Ovid's *Heroidae*. Like the Latin poet Dutt also let his lyric exuberance and tenderness full play only when he wrote in the person of a woman. These epistles amply testify to this proclivity common between the two poets so distantly separated in time and space.

The second epistle is from Tārā (Star), the wife of Bṛhaspati the guru of the gods, addressed to Soma (Moon) who was for some time living as a student with Bṛhaspati. Tārā fell in love with the good-looking young scholar, and when the latter had completed his studies and was leaving for home Tārā sent him this letter professing her shameful infatuation. Recalling the occasions that brought them together and mentioning her covert attempts to make Soma's days more comfortable in the frugal and austere household of his guru, Tārā pleads passionately:

> Pardon me, my friend. A tame bird, let out of the cage, craves for a passage into its cage once again. Do you come back and come quick. I'll make for the pleasure grove, if you, O bird of paradise, take me in tow. Come and extend the protection of your love ; a wanderer in love I am. I'll go where you go ; I'll do what you do ; I'll throw my heart and soul at your feet.

Dutt's 'heroic' poetry started as a *tour de force*. It is therefore no wonder that he felt a strong lyric impulse even when he was writing his first 'epicling' *Tilottamāsambhav*. The time-honoured and worn-out theme of Vaishnav poetry, the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, caught his fancy not only because he belonged to a Vaishnav family and knew Vaishnav poetry very well but also because he was familiar with the Vaishnav songs of his countryman[2] and name-sake Madhusūdan Kān. Kān's songs were based on Vaishnav lyrics and were sung in tunes taken from folk music and as

[2] Dutt and Kān both belonged to the district of Jessore in lower central Bengal. Kān was some years older than Dutt.

such became very popular. Like Kān and the older Vaishnav poets, Dutt put his signature in the last couplet in the Odes on Rādhā. But Kān subscribed himself as 'Sūdan' in his songs while Dutt signed himself Madhu. These short lyrical poems by Dutt, written in 1859, were in the press for a long time and were finally published in 1861, between the two volumes of *Meghanādvadh,* under the title *Brajāṅganā* (Cowherd Damsel). The reason for delay in publication was the insistence of some of his friends to drop it.

The odes number eighteen, and they describe the longing of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa in her various moods affected by the various seasons and aspects of nature. The poet had intended to write a second volume of odes echoing the triumph of Rādhā's love. But it never materialized although *Brajāṅganā* was very well received.

The odes of *Brajāṅganā* demonstrate Dutt's skill as a versifier. There is a variety of rhymed metres, of which some are tried here for the first time. The structure of the stanza containing verse lines of irregular foot is also an important novelty. The diction is simple and musical. In versification there are faint echoes of the lyric songs of Bhāratcandra, and the implied role of Rādhā's friend and *confidante* (to whom Rādhā pours her feelings) indicates Dutt's indebtedness to Kān and in lesser degree to Jayadeva. We may miss in Dutt's odes the ring of devotion of early Vaishnav poetry, but they do not appear as artificial and mechanical as many of the Kīrttan songs produced *en masse* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do. Dutt had no special love for Vaishnavism nor had he any proneness for trite sentimentality. But as a poet he could not remain unaffected by the poetic beauty of the most significant of the traditional themes of Bengali lyric poetry. Rājnārāyaṇ Bose, his valued personal friend and a discerning critic of his poetry, suffering under-exaggerated moral prejudice, condemned the odes for the 'immoralness' of the subject matter, the illicit love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Dutt made this vigorous reply: 'When you sit

down to read poetry, leave aside all religious bias. Besides, Mrs. Radha is not such a bad woman after all. If she had a "Bard" like your humble servant from the beginning she would have been a very different character.'

The original of the following excerpt (two initial stanzas) from one of the odes is written in a kind of *terza rima.*

> Why did you pluck so many blossoms, my dear, filling up the basket? Does the night shrouded in clouds wear the diadem of stars? Why should I, a cowherd girl, caress any more the tender flowers? No more would I, a cowherd damsel, wear a garland of flowers. Why did you pluck out the charm of the creeper, the pride of the woodland? The bee is her friend; but there is none for Rādhā, a luckless girl.

Brajāṅganā won instantaneous popularity, and the lovers of orthodox poetry who did not approve of the free metre and the 'heroic' poetry of Dutt could not resist the appeal of these odes. Dutt's triumph was now complete.

His last book of poems is a collection of 102 sonnets written at Versailles in France in 1865, and published in the next year under the title *Caturdaśpadī Kavitāvalī* (Fourteen-verse-lined Poems). The poet had first tried his hand at the sonnet when he was writing the third canto of *Meghanādvadh.*[3] Although the experiment was not repeated till five years later, he was not insensible to the potentiality of this new form of lyric poetry, as his comment to Rājnārāyaṇ Bose indicates: 'In my humble opinion, if cultivated by men of genius, our sonnet in time would rival the Italian.'

As a work of art the sonnet is the best composition that Dutt produced. The adaptation of this new form of lyric poetry was entirely successful, and the poet's economy of diction was admirably suited to the compact structure of the

[3] The poem, an earlier version of Sonnet 3 (on the Bengali language), was communicated in a letter to Rājnārāyaṇ Bose.

sonnet. The lyrical tendency obtained here a fuller scope, and the poet's self a freer expression. The subject matter of some of the poems reveals the nostalgic, reminiscent mood of the poet who was passing through the dark days of hopeless distress in a distant, foreign land. In others Dutt has paid his compliments to some of his favourite poets, past and present, native and foreign,[4] and to some of his friends. Not a few are on characters and incidents from mythology and literature, Sanskrit and Bengali. The following may be taken as a typical sonnet from Dutt's pen.

> Have I signed my name in vain on the sands of thy shore, O time? Are the towering foam-crested waves trying again and again to wipe out this inscription of mine hastily and in contempt? Or is it that I've engraved it in an auspicious moment on the peak of the mountain of glory, inscribing the syllables with the tool of excellence which Oblivion cannot wash away by sweeping floods, or screen it under a coat of dirt? In a river bed dried of water men wait for the seasonal spate ; in a house of worship where there is no idol to worship God dwells unseen ; even ashes blaze when they are thrown into a pit of fire. In like manner when the mortal frame succumbs to the onslaught of time, life still persists on the earth, in the resthouse of memory as it were, in hell if infamous, in heaven if meritorious.

Michael Madhusūdan Dutt, as he said about himself in a letter to Bose, was indeed a tremendous literary rebel and what he brought about was a literary revolution. The predominant spirit of his age was revolt against age-old conventionality and cramping orthodoxy. This spirit of revolt took the form of a tremendous creative urge in Dutt, and in conscious response to it he stood up to fight single-handed the inane repetition and degenerate verbosity that

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[4] Petrarch (dedication), Kāśīrām, Kṛttivās, Jayadeva, Kālidāsa, Īśvarcandra Gupta, Dante, Tennyson, Hugo and Vālmīki.

then passed for poetry. His attempts at the free metre were actuated as much by genius as by his very conscious reaction against Bhāratcandra whom he admired as 'a man of elegant genius' but condemned as 'the father of a very vile school of poetry'. The free verse made a pathway for the new poetry and imagination. The personality of the first writer of the new poetry was forceful, dynamic and reckless; and the mighty and the reckless had appeal for him. This is why the heroes of his 'heroic' poems were so chosen or moulded; this is why his Rāma is often a bundle of nerves before the forceful and dominant figure of Rāvaṇ.

The poetry of Dutt necessarily evolved its own diction and devised its own pattern of vocables. Paratexis and anacoluthon are the main devices needed for the irregular pause in the free metre. Lexical words had to be largely requisitioned for the grandeur of style in the 'heroic' poems, Coining of denominative verbs added to the vigour and expressiveness of diction, but it was carried to the extreme in his only prose work *Hekṭarvadh* (Fall of Hector, 1871) which was intended for but was never accepted as a school or college textbook. Dutt was never squeamish in borrowing words and imageries from the old poets of Bengal, nor was he hesitant in tapping the European masters of poetry. He was bold enough to use dialectal words and forms if he thought they suited his poetry. In spite of his knowledge of many languages, or rather because of it Dutt was a thorough master of his own speech. His imagination was steeped in the mythology of the two Indian epics, and this found frequent expression in classical allusions not only in his poetry but in his letters as well as in ordinary parlance. It was not an affectation, as many of his critics have alleged.

HEMCHANDRA BANERJI (1838-1903) was a graduate in Arts and in Law. His first longer poem *Cintātaraṅgiṇī* (Stream of Thought, 1861) was occasioned by the suicide of a

personal friend. It was written in the pattern of Īśvarcandra Gupta and Raṅgalāl Banerji, and having been prescribed as a text for University examinations made him widely known as a rising poet. The influence of the poems of Raṅgalāl Banerji, his neighbour at Kidderpore, was much more predominant in his next poem *Bīrbāhu* (The Strong-armed Hero, 1864). The story is imaginary, and the author had intended to project the valiant spirit of the patriotic Hindus into the very remote past. After this Banerji produced some short poems a few of which are translations or adaptations from English. He adapted two plays of Shakespeare for the stage, *Tempest* (1868) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1895). Among his short poems is to be found one of the most popular and effective he ever wrote. *Bhāratsaṅgīt* (Song of India) as soon as published (1870) became the national hymn of the educated young Bengal that was now fully awake to the inglorious position of India as a subject nation and was in a mood of self-criticism. The impassioned effusion of the poem made its influence felt in the literary activity of the country for the next three decades. It also played an important part in channeling the inarticulate anti-British feeling of the people. Although the British are not mentioned the implication was there all too clear, and so the poem had to be expunged from the second edition (1871) of his book of poems (*Kavitāvalī,* 1870) as he was then the senior Government pleader at the Calcutta High Court.

Banerji wrote a critical and appreciative preface to the second and annotated edition (1863) of *Meghanādvadh,* which the poet hailed as coming from the pen of 'a real B.A.'. But Dutt's poetry did not make much impression on Banerji. Even in his biggest and best known poem *Bṛtrasaṃhār* (The Killing of Bṛtra), a full-fledged 'epic' poem in twenty-five cantos (published in two parts; 1875, 1877) the influence of Dutt is superficial. Banerji was an inveterate rhymer, and was a true successor of Gupta. Though he was one of the

few contemporary writers of verse who could properly scan Dutt's free metre, he was himself incapable of handling it. The portions of his 'epic' poem which look like being written in free metre are really in unrhyming Payār couplets and quadruplets. Banerji lacked the linguistic equipment of Dutt, as also his fire and his genius. The canvas of *Bṛtrasaṃhār* is big enough and the theme ambitious—the mythological story of Dadhīci sacrificing himself for the cause of the victory of the gods over the demon host of Bṛtra who had occupied the kingdom of the gods and made them his slaves. But the execution is poor and the narration often tedious. However, the poem did enjoy popularity, much more than did *Meghanādvadh* of Dutt. The reason is not far to seek. While Dutt's poetry was learned and his metre rugged and unfamiliar, Banerji's poem was not difficult; his metre was smooth and familiar and there was an unmistakable undercurrent of patriotic sentiment. But with the passing of the century the 'epic' of Hem Chandra Banerji has gone out of vogue and is read only as a college text which was indeed one of the main purposes of writing serious poetry in those days.

Banerji wrote three more big poems, one of which (*Chāyāmayī*, 1880) partly follows Dante's *La Comedia.* There is some metrical skill but hardly any poetry. The humorous and satirical poems written in colloquial style and in the tripping metre of the nursery rhyme and folk poetry and devoted to matters of topical interest show the real talent of Banerji. Herein his indebtedness to Īśvarcandra Gupta is all the more apparent.

Navin Chandra Sen (1846-1909) was the third notable writer of 'epic' poetry. He was a graduate in Arts hailing from Chittagong and had joined Government service. There was a time when Navin Chandra Sen was considered a master poet and the successor of Hem Chandra Banerji. But the judgement of the immediate posterity makes Sen only a minor poet, although his literary output is heavier than the

collected works of his predecessors Dutt and Banerji put together. Sen's earliest book of verse was published in 1871. But it was his Byronic poem on the Battle of Plassey (*Palāśir Juddha*, 1875) in five cantos of Spenserian stanzas that established his reputation. The next poem was a romantic narrative after Scott (*Raṅgamatī*, 1880). His most notable work, a trilogy on the Krishna story as in the *Mahābhārata*, was published in three independent volumes: *Raivatak* (1886), *Kurukṣetra* (1893) and *Prabhās* (1896). In these three books of romantic poetry garnished with moral and theological digressions, Krishna the guiding spirit of Pāṇḍavas is made a champion of the union between the fighting spirits of Aryandom and Non-Aryandom. In this conception (or rather interpretation of the *Mahābhārata*) Sen was much influenced by the interpretation of Krishnaism given by Bankim Chandra Chatterji.

The main defects of the trilogy as a poem are obvious. The author lacked that imagination on the grand scale which the theme demanded and he also lacked fire. Linguistic equipment was not adequate. Flashes of romantic fancy are rather rare and characterization is seldom real. The historical atmosphere is often marred by frivolity and sentimental effusion. On the whole the trilogy suffers from a failure of imagination. The later works of Sen comprising prose and poetry need not detain us. But mention may be made of *Bhānumatī* (1900), a romance written in prose and poetry (in a kind of the Sanskrit *Campū* style).

The romantic strain, bereft of the patriotic bias and tinged with personal colouring, appeared strong in *Jogeś* (1881) by Ishan Chandra Banerji (1856-1897), the youngest brother of Hem Chandra Banerji. His other works are three books of short poems (1878, 1880, 1887) in some of which the influence of the elder Banerji and of Sen is clear. *Jogeś* is a tragic tale of unrequited love, and the hero is partially a self-portrait of the author. The poem does not show much

excellence of art but it breathes sincerity, which can be said for so few of such works.

Among the metrical romances *Udāsinī* (The Girl Recluse, 1874) by Akshaychandra Chaudhuri (1850-1898) is worth mention. The story is partly adapted from Parnell's *The Hermit* which was then prescribed as a University text and therefore widely read and repeatedly translated into verse. The earliest translator of *The Hermit* was Raṅgalāl Banerji (1858). Chaudhuri's diction is smooth and lyrical.

19

PROSE FICTION AND BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI

As in poetry so in prose the romance had its earliest inspiration from the pages of Tod's *Rajasthan* and similar works, and the earliest historical stories recounted by a Bengali writer were in English—the *Tales of Yore* (?1848) by Sashichandra Dutt who belonged to a Calcutta family that was pioneer in English learning. Bhudev Mukherji (1825-94), an eminent Hindu Collegean, was one of the first to write historical fiction in Bengali. His *Aitihāsik Upanyās* (Historical Tales, 1862) contains a story and a novelette; the subject matter of both was taken from J. H. Caunter's *Romance of History*. The second story, *Aṅgurīyavinimay* (Exchange of Rings), is an improvement upon Caunter's tale, *The Mahratta Chief*. It tells the story of Sivaji's victory over the army of Aurangzeb and the incipient love between him and his fair prisoner, the daughter of the Mughal emperor. The story is well written, and historical atmosphere is maintained. Mukherji's tale supplied the main outline of the story of Bankim Chandra Chatterji's *Durgeśnandinī*, the first romantic novel in Bengali. Mukherji's stiffness of style stood in the way of his historical tale winning wider appreciation which it deserved.

Bengali fiction in its proper sense, that is an original treatment of Bengali life and manners, was initiated by Peary Chand Mitra (1814-83) who invariably used the pen-name 'Ṭekcāṁd Ṭhākur' in his original Bengali writings which include six books—picaresque fiction and social sketches, moral lessons, and didactic and spiritual tales—all primarily intended for women readers. Mitra was a Hindu Collegean. He had been well read in Bengali before he went for English education. He was a man of manifold activities and had various interests including commercial enterprise. In his later days Mitra was interested also in

spiritualism and Theosophy. His rich and varied experience was however only partially utilized in his social sketches and didactic tales.

Peary Chand Mitra's literary activity began in 1854 when he started a monthly 'penny' magazine for women, in collaboration with Radhanath Sikdar, the man who discovered that Mt. Everest was the highest peak of the Himalayas. The editors felt that the current high style of literary prose would defeat their purpose, and they set up their own easy style that was a compromise between the literary language and the spoken style.

Mitra's first, and best representative work, *Ālāler Gharer Dulāl* (Pampered Son of a Front Rank Family) is the first specimen of original fiction that appeared first in the pages of the penny monthly magazine (*Māsik Patrikā*) in 1855-57 and in book form in 1858. It is the tragic career of the elder son of an elderly man who had made money but lacked proper education and good sense. The boy was allowed to do as he liked and this finally brought ruin upon him. But the younger brother was a good boy and he ultimately saved his brother. The story is palpably didactic and lacks the completeness of a novel. But characterization generally is not only good but sometimes brilliant, and the episodes though scrappy glow with life and humour. The ways of the middle-class gentry in the neighbouring towns on the Hooghly in the early nineteenth century are faithfully delineated, which we find nowhere else in contemporary literature. *Ālāler Gharer Dulāl* may be called a picaresque novel if we consider the career of Ṭhak Cācā (literally, Uncle Cheat) the Muslim munshi and similar figures. Ṭhak Cācā is a double-dyed villain but human all the same. Like the sixteenth century poet Kavikaṅkaṇ's Bhāṁṛu-Datta, Mitra's Ṭhak Cācā is an immortal rogue in Bengali literature.

What Michael Madhusūdan Dutt did for Bengali poetry was done, though on a much lesser scale, by Peary Chand

Mitra for Bengali fiction. Mitra created his own style, which in spite of its grammatical crudities and lexical inelegance, was expressive, lively and adequate. Before the publication of Mitra's tale (we may put aside Mukherji's romantic tale from our consideration as it was not entirely original and was intended for use as a college textbook), fiction in Bengali meant only folk-tales and romantic adventurous tales from Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and English. It was Mitra who, as one of his earliest critics Rajendralal Mitra pointed out, relieved the general reader from the tedium of the adventurous folk-tales in pedestrian verse and pedantic prose.

The potentialities of Mitra's prose style and the possibilities of his fictional attempt escaped notice of the contemporary writers who could not yet break away from the spell of the sonorous high style of Vidyasagar. An exception was Kālīprasanna Siṃha (1840-76), the man who had the *Mahābhārata* translated literally into Bengali prose and distributed the printed copies gratis, and who gave an enthusiastic public reception to Michael Madhusūdan Dutt on the latter's signal achievement in Bengali poetry. Siṃha wrote some satirical sketches of the Calcutta life in some of its social and personal aspects. The stupid insincerity and the vile morals of the new rich received his best attention. The language is entirely colloquial, rather Calcutta cockney, and the style humorous but often vulgar. It is obvious that Siṃha received his inspiration from Mitra's tale but he missed the rugged dignity of his precursor's style and lacked the humanism of his outlook and the richness of his experience. Siṃha's *Hutom Peṁcār Nakśā* (Sketches by a Watching Owl, 1862) is an enjoyable work, if one goes in for cheap and vulgar wit. Its chief value now is historical.

The success of Siṃha's sketches was immediate and immense, and a host of imitators sprang up, some taking up the cudgel on behalf of those influential men who were the targets of Siṃha's satire. Siṃha's style was profitably adopted by some of the writers in the early seventies who adapted

the novels of Reynolds. The earliest work of this type, *Haridāser Guptakathā* (The Scandalous Tale of Haridās, 1872), was so popular among the half-educated and the adolescent specially, that a regular crop of such 'Scandalous Tales' (*Guptakathā*) flooded the market of cheap fiction. It must not be presumed that these works were all or wholly vulgar or entirely trivial. Some were quite good romances of the juvenile type. One thing must be said for these works now forgotten—that they were written entirely in a bold colloquial style which accounted for a part of their spontaneous popularity.

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI (1838-94) was educated at the Hooghly College and belonged to an orthodox family. He did for Bengali fiction what Michael Madhusūdan Dutt had done for Bengali poetry, that is, he brought in imagination. Chatterji was more fortunate than Dutt as he did not have to set up his own diction from the very start. The prose style was already standardized ; what Chatterji did was to break its monotony, shear off its ponderous verbosity and give it a twist of informality and intimacy. Chatterji's own style grew up as he went on writing.

Chatterji, following the discipline of Īśvarcandra Gupta, began his literary career as a writer of verse. Fortunately he was not slow to feel that poetry was not his *metier*. He then turned to fiction. His first attempt was a novelette in Bengali submitted for a declared prize. The prize did not come to him and the novelette was never published. His first fiction to appear in print was *Rajmohan's Wife* (published serially in *Indian Field* in 1864). It is written in English and is probably a translation of the novelette submitted for the prize. *Durgeśnandinī* (Daughter of the Feudal Lord), his first Bengali romance, was published next year (1865). Bhudev Mukherji's tale (*Aṅgurīyavinimay*) supplied the nucleus of the plot which was modelled somewhat after Scott's *Ivanhoe*. The high style of Vidyasagar is

followed and the influence of the contemporary predilection for low humour and buffoonery is admitted in the superfluous character of the idiotic brahman. But the tale was something that was undoubtedly new and entirely delightful. The pseudo-historical background was a justification for a pure love romance intended for readers who knew only married love.

The next novel *Kapālkuṇḍalā* (1866) is one of the best romances written by Chatterji. The theme is lyrical and gripping and, in spite of the melodrama and the dual story, the execution is skilful. The heroine, named after the mendicant woman in Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava,* is modelled partly after Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā and partly after Shakespeare's Miranda. The diction matches the lyrical nature of the main story.

The next romance *Mṛṇālinī* (1869) indicates an amateurishness and a definite falling off from the standard. It is a love romance against a historical background sadly neglected and confused. The main characters are inchoate and undeveloped, and the story unconvincing. The parallel story of Paśupati and Manoramā could have been better developed into a separate novel. It is not unlikely that *Mṛṇālinī* was actually written before *Kapālkuṇḍalā*.

After this Chatterji was not content to continue only as a writer of prose romances, but appeared also as a writer with the definite mission of stimulating the intellect of the Bengali speaking people through literary campaign and of bringing about a cultural revival thereby. With this end in view he brought out the monthly *Baṅgadarśan* (Mirror of Bengal) in 1872. In the pages of this magazine all his writings except the very last two works first came out. These writings include novels, stories, humorous sketches, historical and miscellaneous essays, informative articles, religious discourses, literary criticisms and reviews.

With the exception of two stories and a novelette, Chatterji's fiction is domestic romance with a moral under-

lining and a social motive. *Viṣavṛkṣa* (The Poison Tree, 1873) was his first novel to appear serially in *Baṅgadarṣan*. The theme is a domestic tragedy brought about by widow-remarriage. Nagendra, an educated and rich young man, happily married, meets by chance the young orphan girl Kunda (Kundanandinī) whom he is obliged to give shelter in his home. She is given in marriage to a relation of his wife Sūryamukhī but soon comes back a widow. Nagendra now falls in love with Kunda. Sūryamukhī became aware of this and as a wife ready to please her husband had not much trouble in inducing him to marry Kunda. After the marriage she left home unknown to anybody. Nagendra's love for Kunda soon died and he went out in search of Sūryamukhī. The latter had been rescued from sure death by a sannyasi. Nagendra found Sūryamukhī and the couple were reconciled. Kunda was broken hearted and committed suicide. There are episodes and minor characters which relieve the story from the tedium of motivation. In this novel the Bengalee reader for the first time received glowing glimpses of the middle class domestic life. Chatterji's narrative skill had full play in *Viṣavṛkṣa*. Nevertheless it marks a setback for Chatterji as a novelist as here he begins to assert himself as a teacher of morality and does not remain satisfied as an interpreter of life. It also makes him out as a non-progressive reformer. Chatterji was one of the first two graduates of the newly founded Calcutta University. He, however, held orthodox views on some vital social problems and did not support widow-remarriage.

Candraśekhar (1877) suffers markedly from the impact of two parallel plots which have little common ground. The scene is once again shifted back to the eighteenth century. But the novel is not historical. It has however one remarkable feature ; it is the only novel of Chatterji that depicts the full development of a character, viz. the heroine Śaivalinī. The plot has suffered from the author's weakness for the occult.

The next novel *Rajanī* (1877) followed the autobiographical technique of Wilkie Collins' *A Woman in White.* The title role is modelled after Bulwar Lytton's Nydia in *Last Days of Pompeii.* In this romance of a blind girl Chatterji is at his best as a literary artist. Characterization is uniformly good and the style easy and unaffected.

In *Kṛṣṇakānter Uil* (Krishnakanta's Will, 1878) Chatterji added some amount of feeling to imagination, and as a result it approaches nearest to the western novel. The plot is somewhat akin to that of *The Poison Tree.* The story opens with an episode of domestic intrigue leading to the infatuation of a married man for a young widow with better looks than his wife and ends with the ruin it brought upon the family. The lesson is that the self-sacrifice of a loyal wife can ultimately save the soul of a man, and that purely carnal love can only lead to ruin.

The only novel of Chatterji's that can claim full recognition as historical fiction is *Rājsiṃha* (1881, rewritten and enlarged 1893). But the historical environment of the plot is often marred by the introduction of unhistorical episodes and of characters that have little historical bearing. Nevertheless, the story is very interestingly told.

Ānandamaṭh (The Mission House of the Ānandas, 1882) is a political novel without a sufficient plot. It definitely marks the decline of Chatterji's power as a novelist. The plot of the meagre story is based on the Sannyasi rebellion that occurred in North Bengal in 1773. Chatterji gave it a politico-religious twist. He made his characters selfless patriots, inspired by the teachings of the *Gītā,* who fought against odds with the British whom they looked upon as the arch enemy of the country, responsible for the terrible famine of the preceding year. The author as an administrative officer of the government could not but show that this estimate of the British rule in India was wrong, and he attributed the failure of the Ānandas to their own weaknesses rather than the superior forces and ingenuity of the British. But

Chatterji was not overmuch fond of the British rule not only as a true son of India but also on personal grounds. He was also not insensible to the national movement which was slowly gathering force. *Ānandamaṭh* was his vengeance as well as his tribute. As fiction it cannot be called an outstanding work. But as the book that interpreted and illustrated the gospel of patriotism and gave Bengal the song 'Bande-mātaram' (I Worship Mother) which became the mantra of nationalism, *Ānandamaṭh* is the most vital work of Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Incidentally it gave tremendous impetus to the various patriotic and national activities culminating in the terrorist movement initiated in Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century.

In the mean time Chatterji was gradually missing art for propaganda. A revival of orthodox Hinduism based on a pseudo-scientific explanation of the *Bhagavadgītā* and other texts, a reactionary movement counteracting progressive thought and Brahmo monotheism, and deriving indirect support from Theosophy, made the novelist almost a complete convert. *Devī Caudhurāṇī* (1884) fully reveals him as such. The story is romantic and interesting and is delightfully told, no doubt. Some episodes are charmingly realistic. But the development of the central figure from the poor and neglected first wife of a well-to-do brahman young man to a female Robin Hood following the cult of Krishna the detached Master of the *Bhagavadgītā*, is unconvincing and unwarranted.

Chatterji's last novel *Sītārām* (1886) has for its theme the insurgency of a Hindu chief of lower central Bengal against the impotent Muslim rule. The central figure is well delineated but other figures are either too idealistic or impalpable. The plot is neither well conceived nor well woven, and the style is uneven and somewhat slipshod.

After the novels, the humorous sketches are the outstanding productions of Chatterji. *Kamalākānter Daptar* (The Scribblings of Kamalākānta, 1875; enlarged as

Kamālakānta, 1885) contains half humorous and half serious sketches somewhat after De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.* It shows the writer at his best. Chatterji's serious essays are collected in two volumes. The topics range from positivism to literary criticism and from history to popular science. In two of his longest essays Chatterji took great pains to interpret the basic ideas of Mill's Utilitarianism and Compte's Positivistic Humanism. His analysis of the economic condition of agrarian Bengal is acute, and one could wish that he had maintained this interest in the life of the people. But unfortunately that element of his mental make-up which was attracted by the mysterious and the occult was gradually getting the upper hand. He lost his interest in Utiliterianism and in the problems of the Bengal peasantry and took to the study of the Sankhya philosophy and the *Gītā.* The closing years of his life were almost entirely devoted to the study of the *Gītā* and the problems of Krishnaism. The result of this enquiry is embodied in the two volumes, *Dharmatattva* (Essence of Religion, 1888) and *Kṛṣṇacaritra* (Life and Character of Krishna, 1882 ; revised 1892). The last work is a monument of Chatterji's power of critical analysis and of the clarity of his historical perspective.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji was a superb story-teller, and a master of romance. He is also a great novelist in spite of the fact that his outlook on life was neither deep nor critical, nor was his canvas wide. But he was something more than a great novelist. He was a pathfinder and a pathmaker. Chatterji represented the English-educated Bengalee with a tolerably peaceful home life, sufficient wherewithal and some prestige, as the bearer of the torch of western enlightenment. The only problem of life that stirred his literary impulse, and that too lightly, was domestic unhappiness of what now appears to have been the most superficial kind. The rosy glow of romance that pervades his novels was indeed symbolic of the easier life and the spacious days of the late Victorian

Bengal. The readers of his novels felt that glow and they feel it even now. No Bengali writer before or since has enjoyed such spontaneous and universal popularity as Chatterji. His novels have been translated in almost all the major languages of India, and have helped to stimulate literary impulses in those languages.

SANJIV CHANDRA CHATTERJI (1834-89), an elder brother of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, was a born *reconteur*. He might have been a better novelist than his younger brother if only he was less whimsical and more steady in his literary pursuits. He edited his brother's monthly during the later years of its existence and himself started a small monthly entitled *Bhramar* (from April 1874). Both magazines were printed at and published from their ancestral village home at Kāṁṭhālpāḍā (about 24 miles to the north of Calcutta). The first two issues of *Bhramar* contained two stories by the editor, the last of which was the nearest to the short story proper as introduced later by Rabindranath Tagore. *Kaṇṭhamālā* (The Necklace, 1877) is a loosely knit and carelessly written novel. The philanthropic society outlined in Chapter Twenty supplied the idea of *Ānandamaṭh* to Bankim Chandra Chatterji. In *Mādhavīlatā* (The Entwining Creeper; serially 1878-80) the earlier history of some of the characters of *Kaṇṭhamālā* is recounted. The story reminds us of Bengali folk-tales. The plot is rambling, the narration casual and the sequel abrupt. But the figure of Pitam is a lovable creation, and is probably a self-portrait of the author. *Jāl Pratāpcānd* (The False Pratapchand, 1881) tells fascinatingly the story of domestic intrigue in a very rich family which became a *cause célèbre* in the early nineteenth century. It is as much fiction as history, and is narrated with feeling. The most characteristic and the best known work of Sanjiv Chandra Chatterji are his travel sketches named *Pālāmau* (serially, 1880-82). Here the author's lyric feeling has found adequate expression against the colourful background of the

primitive man and the unspoiled nature of the Chota-Nagpur hills in the fifties of the last century.

Sanjiv Chandra Chatterji was a gifted writer. He had imagination and feeling, but he was careless and lacked industry, which made his stature seem smaller than it actually was. The elder Chatterji was a poet even if he wrote only prose, which the younger Chatterji never was, despite a book of verse that stands to his credit (or discredit).

THE day-to-day life of the lower middle class people, their mean jealousies, petty bickerings, dumb sufferings and simple joys were the subject-matter of Taraknath Ganguli's (1845-91) *Svarṇalatā* (1873). It was the first domestic novel in Bengali with genuine realistic touches. The characters are drawn directly from life. There is no influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, either in the technique or in the style. Ganguli wrote three stories and two more novels, the materials of which also appear to have come mainly from his own experience. He was a medical doctor in government service.

Pratap Chandra Ghosh's (d. 1920) *Baṅgādhīp-parājay* (Defeat of the Lord of Lower Bengal ; published in two parts, 1869 and 1884) was not in the least influenced by the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, and in length it is the only original novel written in the nineteenth century that could match its English contemporaries. The theme is historical— the fall of Pratāpāditya of Jessore brought about by his own arrogance and weakness and helped by domestic intrigue. The author was an antiquarian of some repute, being the Assistant Librarian of the Asiatic Society and he took great pains not to deviate from history, and to recreate the atmosphere of the early seventeenth century and capture the local colour as far as he could. The characterization is good. But as a fiction *Defeat of the Lord of Lower Bengal* suffers from a ponderous style, long descriptions and a wearily slow-moving narration. The whole effect is rather dull. But

in spite of the heavy reading the novel was not entirely rejected by the reading public.

Ramesh Chandra Dutt (1848-1909), better known as R. C. Dutt outside Bengal, a member of the Indian Civil Service and a President of the Indian National Congress, took to writing historical and domestic romances at the instance of Bankim Chandra Chatterji. His first two novels are pseudo-historical romances; *Baṅgavijetā* (Conqueror of Bengal, 1874) takes us to the days of Akbar, and *Mādhavī-kaṅkaṇ* (The Wristlet of Mādhavī-twig, 1877) to the days of Shahjahan. The next two novels are truly historical; *Mahārāṣṭra Jīvanprabhāt* (The Dawn of Life for the Marathas, 1878) narrates Aurangzeb's clashes with Sivaji and the emergence of the Marathas as a power in India, and *Rājput Jīvansandhyā* (The Sundown of Life for the Rajputs, 1879) describes the decline of the Rajput militarism during the reign of Jehangir. In the second edition the four novels were published in a single volume entitled *Śatavarṣa* (The Hundred Years, 1879), as the stories carry us through a hundred years' rule of four successive Mughal emperors. *Baṅgavījetā* suffers from a crowding of incidents and characters, and the English basis of some of these are but thinly covered. The story of *Mādhavīkaṅkaṇ* is partly based on Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*. In technique and style it shows marked improvement upon its predecessor. *Jīvan-prabhāt* is still better written. Dutt's Aurangzeb is better delineated than Chatterji's character in his *Rājsiṃha*. There is also a clear expression of the author's love for the mother-land. In *Jīvansandhyā* history gets the upper hand and the story element is subordinated. The overcrowding of incidents and the high tempo of narration have interfered with its effectiveness as fiction.

Dutt's last two novels are mild and idyllic romances of lower middle class life in rural and urban west Bengal. Dutt was posted for some time as a district officer in this region, and he apparently drew from his own experience.

A faithful picture of typical peasant families belonging to this region is drawn in the Rev. Lal Behary Dey's *Bengal Peasant Life* (London, 1874). In *Saṃsār* (The Family, 1886)[1] Dutt fearlessly supports widow-remarriage. It indicates his standpoint contrasted against Chatterji's and the popularity of this well-written novel proves how far the reading public was mentally advanced since the publication of Chatterji's *The Poison Tree*. *Samāj* (The Society, 1894) follows the career of the principal characters of the same family.

R. C. Dutt translated the whole of the *Rigveda* into Bengali prose (1885-87) and compiled important religious texts with translations after the manner of Muir in his *Sanskrit Texts*. This was published in two volumes (1895-96). His English adaptations of the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are well known, and so also his brief survey of Bengali literature (*The Literature of Bengal*, 1887). His *Civilization in India* in two volumes is a good study of the cultural history of the country.

In the literary history of Bengal as well as in the cultural, and to some extent also in the political, history of India R. C. Dutt had played his part well. His was an energetic personality and he contributed materially to the building up of the nation in its formative period.

THE tragic ending of some of Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novels was unpalatable to the general readers, specially the adolescent and the womenfolk who were accustomed to tales that always ended in happy wedlock or festive family reunion. So Damodar Mukherji (1853-1907) wrote his first novel *Mṛṇmayī* (1874) that carried the best of Chatterji's tragic stories, *Kapālkuṇḍalā*, to a happy end. In *Nabābnandinī* (The Nabob's Daughter) the story of Ayesha the other heroine of Chatterji's *Durgeśnandinī* is continued to an approved

[1] Translated into English by the author under the title *The Lake of Palms* (London, 1902).

termination. Mukherji successfully adapted Scott's *The Bride of Lammermore* in his *Kamalkumārī* and Wilkie Collins' *A Woman in White* in his *Śuklavasanā Sundarī*. Besides these he wrote more than a dozen original novels. Sensationalism and open didacticism are the main features of his fiction.

Historical fiction-writing was a much easier operation than handling purely imaginary plots. So the novel writers of the late nineteenth century had a preference for the 'historical' novel which was often no history and less novel. But there were sporadic productions which were better history than anything that had been written as history on the topic or on the period. One such book is Hārāṇ Chandra Rāhā's *Raṇacaṇḍī* (1876). The story belongs to the traditional history of Kachar in the north-eastern corner of Bengal bordering on Assam. The author had heard the tale from an old barber who in his young days had attended Govindacandra Nārāyaṇ the last king of Kachar. He also heard it from an old gentleman who had been an agent of the widow of the king.

Svarṇa Kumārī Devī (1855-1932), an elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore, was the first all-round and accomplished literary woman of Bengal. Her literary activities continued uninterrupted for well nigh half a century and included novels, short stories, poetry and drama. Her first novel *Dīpnirvāṇ* (The Burning Out of the Lamp, 1876) had for its plot the well-known historical story of Prithviraj. The next two books, *Chinnamukul* (The Plucked Blossom, 1879) a novel, and *Mālatī* (1879) a long story, have for their theme sisterly love. Among her later novels *Snehalatā* (1892) is the most remarkable. Herein appears for the first time some of the problems of the advanced set of the middle class society of Calcutta. Svarṇa Kumārī Devī successfully edited for some years the monthly magazine *Bhāratī* which was started by her brothers in 1877.

Among the contemporary writers of fiction two names are specially worthy of mention, Sivanath Sastri (1847-1919)

and Srish Chandra Majumdar (d. 1908). The former's *Mejabau* (The Second Daughter-in-law, 1879) and *Jugāntar* (Passing of an Age, 1895) may not be very well knit as novels but they present good pictures of domestic and social life of the very interesting period when English education was looked upon with alarm in the orthodox home. Majumdar's romances, *Śaktikānan* (1877), *Phuljāni* (1894) and *Viśvanāth* (1896), present brilliant views of the not uninteresting days in village life a hundred years or two ago. He shows the rare gift of going deep into the beauty of nature and capturing the elusive atmosphere of idyllic romanticism.

Nagendranath Gupta (1861-1940) who later made his name as a journalist started on his literary career as a novelist in 1883 when his first romantic novel *Parvatavāsinī* came out. The next book *Līlā* (1885) is a very good domestic novel. Gupta continued to write novels till a few years before his death. These novels follow Bankim Chandra Chatterji's pattern of romance with the dramatic element predominating. Gupta wrote a few short stories, some of which are of abiding value.

INDRANATH BANERJI'S (1849-1911) satirical writings (including verses, sketches, stories and a novel) were once widely appreciated, not only for their own value but also for the reactionary and orthodox attitude of the writer. But at the present day the grossness and vulgarity, the main ingredients of his sarcasm and wit, appear too much for the literary taste, and Banerji is now a forgotten writer, although some of his writings deserve a better fate. Banerji's satirical novel *Kṣudirām* (1874) created the vogue of attacking the progressive society by a section of journalistic writers. As a satire his poem *Bhārat-uddhār* (The Deliverance of India, 1877) in five cantos is a much better work.

Jogendra Chandra Basu (1854-1907), founder of *Baṅgavāsī* the most popular organ of reactionary orthodoxy, was an important member of the literary group led by Indranath

Banerji. Bose wrote half a dozen satirical novels and stories of which the most well-known is *Maḍel Bhaginī* (The Model Sister, 1886-88). It is practically a lampoon against a very well-known family noted for enlightenment and culture. The best work of Bose is *Rājalakṣmī* (1896-1902), the biggest novel in Bengali. The plot is partly based on Hugo's *Les Miserables* and partly on hearsay and fact. Life and manners in Bengal and outside in the beginning of the century are painted glowingly. Some of the minor characters, taken from life and slightly satirized, are enjoyable. Like all other works of Basu it suffers from verbosity. Despite long descriptions and tedious digressions the novel is good reading.

RARE sympathy and humour characterize the entertaining tales of Trailokyanath Mukherji (1847-1919) who followed with success the style and the technique of the folk-tale. The plot of *Kaṅkāvatī* (1892) is nicely woven round a nursery quatrain and following the pattern of *Alice in Wonderland*. In this novel, written for both the young and the old, reality and imagination as well as the pathetic and the grotesque have a unique artistic synthesis. There is mild satire against foolish and pernicious orthodoxy which considerably enlivens the story. The stories in *Muktāmalā* (String of Pearls; published in book form, 1901) may be called the *New Arabian Nights* in Bengali literature, and the figure of Ḍamarudhar the hero of the grotesque and satirical stories collected after the author's death under the title *Ḍamaru-carit* (The Career of Ḍamaru; published in book form, 1923) is a literary caricature that can be compared favourably with Don Quixote and Kai Lung. Mukherji is the best writer among the literary circle that grew up round the editorial desk of *Baṅgavāsī*.

20

THE THEATRE

The public stage was initiated by a group of amateurs who had some previous experience of the private stage. It was the day of 'national' enthusiasm, and the first public theatrical party was named the National Theatre. There was as yet no permanent stage and the performances were held in the spacious halls or courtyards of some notable private houses in Calcutta. The National (later, Great National) Theatre started in December 1872 with *Nīl-darpaṇ* and other plays by Dinabandhu Mitra, which brought immediate success.

The Bengal Theatre is the first public theatre to have a permanent stage in its own house. It was also the first to engage actresses. Before that male actors impersonated the women on the stage. The share capital of the Bengal Theatre was contributed by eighteen young men each putting in a thousand rupees. The promotor and honorary secretary was Sarat Chandra Ghosh, a well-to-do young man of ideas. The National Theatre started with the plays of Dinabandhu Mitra which are full of fun and as such do not require gorgeous costumes and costly stage decorations. The Bengal Theatre imitated the splendour of the private stage of the Raja brothers of Paikpara where *Ratnāvalī* and *Śarmiṣṭhā* had been performed with great *eclat* in the late fifties, and they started with *Śarmiṣṭhā* (August '73) to be followed by *Ratnāvalī* and other works of Dutt and Tarkaratna.

From the beginning of '74 the public stage turned its attention to dramatic performances of the most notable literary works in vogue, mainly the early romances of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and of Ramesh Chandra Dutt, and the 'epic' and narrative poems of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Hem Chandra Banerji and Navin Chandra Sen. The theatre, however, did not fail to cater for the lower taste as well. Pantomimes, burlesques and farces, some of which luridly depicted contemporary scandals and *causes célèbres,*

were much more in demand than the serious plays. By the middle of '75 the modernistic melodrama was introduced on the Bengali stage by Upendranath Das (1848-95). Das became the director of the Great National Theatre in August '75 and it was mainly his activities that brought on the Bengali stage the displeasure of the Government and the police. The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) who had come to Calcutta towards the end of the year '75 expressed the desire that he would like to see a Bengali home. But no worthy Bengali gentleman was then ready to admit a foreigner (be he the heir-apparent to the Indian Empire) to their inner apartments. At last a brahman gentleman from the province who had built up some practice at the Calcutta High Court and who as a Junior Government pleader and nominated member of the provincial Legislative Council was a man known to the authorities, availed of this opportunity to ingratiate himself further into the good graces of the Government. He took the Prince to his inner sanctum, and this was the first time that a foreigner had been admitted into the women's quarter of a Bengalee home.

This provoked a torrent of condemnation from the high society of Calcutta. Hem Chandra Banerji wrote one of his finest satirical poems on this clever move that put a provincial fellow on top of the Government sponsored Bengalee society of Calcutta. The Government being at his back, this gentleman did not have to face social ostracism. But he could not altogether escape punishment which came from an unexpected quarter. An outrageous lampoon on his conduct was staged in the Great National Theatre on the 29th February '76. It was promptly suppressed by the police but was staged again on 3rd March under a different title. The Government was now compelled to issue an ordinance followed by an Act which empowered the provincial administration to prohibit scandalous, defamatory, seditious or obscene stage shows and performances. Upendranath Das's melodrama *Surendra-vinodinī* (first performed at the Bengal

Theatre on August 18, '75) was indicted as an obscene production by the lower court but the decision was set aside on an appeal to the High Court.

SINCE the inception of the public theatre two motives had been equally persuasive in the dramatic compositions and stage performances. One was the educative motive which now took a political colouring. The 'national' spirit, the awakening in the heart of the educated Bengalee of a sense of India's bondage, found expression in many of the plays—be they serious, comic or operatic—that were produced since the establishment of the public stage in '73. The other motive was the entertainment of the audience, and it took different directions which were ultimately coming together. In burlesques and farces the continuity with the past (i.e. the comic *Yātrā*) was maintained. In the operas and musical pieces, which were gaining daily in popularity, the indigenous musical play was taking a new shape on the stage. From the beginning of the eighties the opera was joining hands with serious drama with a mythological theme. In such plays which may be called the devotional drama and which had been initiated by Manomohan Basu in the late sixties, the note of religious devotion was becoming stronger and sharper, and reached its climax in the plays of Girischandra Ghosh who had become a devotee of the prophet of the age, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1833-86).

In dramatic technique the only remarkable innovation was the introduction of the regular free verse, adopted from the free metre of Dutt, by Rajkrishna Ray in 1881. This was more elegantly employed by Girischandra Ghosh in some of his serious plays. In the stage craft there was no improvement worth the name until the early twenties of the next century when the professional stage was strengthened by the educated actors and directors who had seen the performances of Rabindranath Ṭagore's musical plays. In the serious drama

the 'national' movement was insinuated for the first time in Haralal Ray's *Hemalatā* (1873), a romantic play, and *Vaṅger Sukhāvasān* (The End of the Happy Days of Bengal, 1874), a semi-historical play on the Muslim conquest of Bengal in the early thirteenth century. Ray's other plays are not original; *Rudrapāl* (1874) is an adaptation of *Hamlet,* and *Śatrusaṃhār* (The Killing of the Enemy, 1874) and *Kanaka-padma* (The Golden Lotus, 1875) are based on the Sanskrit dramas *Veṇīsaṃhāra* and *Śākuntala* respectively. All the five plays were successfully staged, *Hemalatā* proving the most popular. Ray was a Calcutta school-teacher in Government service.

Jyotirindranath Tagore (1848-1925), an elder brother of Rabindranath Tagore, was perhaps the most accomplished man of his day. He played uncommonly well on the violin and the piano, he composed music, he could draw well and he wrote effective prose. He had a fine figure and was a success on the amateur private stage. It was he who contributed most in directing the literary and artistic development of the amazing genius of Rabindranath Tagore during the latter's boyhood days. The connection of the elder brother with the stage (private) began very early when the Jorasanko Theatre was set up by his family. Jyotirindranath's first play was *Kiñcit Jalayog* (Light Refreshments, 1872), a one-act farce ridiculing the advanced social ideas of a section of the Brahmos led by Keshabchandra Sen. The light sarcasm of the farce is enjoyable, and it was a success also on the public stage (1872-75).

The first national assembly of a sort, the Hindu Mela, was sponsored by Devendranath Tagore, his sons, and friends and was a precursor of the Indian National Congress. The Tagore family led by Devendranath who was called *Maharṣi* (i.e. the great sage) by his admiring countrymen, were nationalists to the bone, and they gave unfailing support to the nationalist press and to all nationalistic moves. Devendranath Tagore's sons and friends wrote the first

national songs and hymns. In Jyotirindranath's first serious play *Puruvikram*[1] (The Might of Puru, 1874) we find for the first time the sustained literary expression of the growing spirit of nationalism. Puru, or Porus as the Greeks called him, was a suitable symbol for the spirit of India that was indomitable even though subjugated and Alexander was a convenient substitute for the British. The play is not very well written but much above the average play written for the stage. Its stage success was not unexpected.

His next work, *Sarojinī* (1875), was a tragic drama depicting the conflict of paternal affection with dominant patriotism. The plot is well made and shows the influence of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Kṛṣṇakumārī* as well of Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Aulis* (Renan's French translation). It was the most successful of Jyotirindranath's plays and retained its popularity for a very long time. It was rendered into more than one *Yātrā* play and performed all over the country. His second farce, *Eman Karma Ār Karbo Nā* (I Won't Do Such a Deed Again, 1877), was also performed with signal success on the stage, private and public. The title was later changed into *Alīk Bābu* (The False Babu, 1900). It is one of the best farces existing in Bengali, and is entirely free from sarcasm or vulgarity.

The third serious play *Aśrumatī* (1879) brings out the conflict of love with family duty against a background of patriotism. The story is taken from Rajput history; the struggle of Pratap Singh of Chitor with the Mughal emperor Akbar is the background of the theme which is the love of Pratap's daughter for Akbar's son. *Aśrumatī* was staged with conspicuous success. Jyotirindranath's next production was a very short musical play, *Mānamayī* (1880), later renamed *Punarvasanta* (The Second Spring, 1899), the meagre plot of which is somewhat based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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[1] It was translated into Gujarati.

His fourth and last original serious play is *Svapnamayī* (1882). It has for its theme a historical incident of late seventeenth century. Sobhasingh and Rahim Khan of South-west Bengal joined hands and rebelled against the Mughal power. They marched northward and killed Krishnaram Ray, the Raja of Burdwan. Sobhasingh occupied his palace and held his daughter Satyavatī a prisoner. When he attempted to make criminal assault on her she killed him with a dagger. This is the story on which the plot is built up. The play cannot be called historical as historicity is subordinated to the fictitious. *Svapnamayī* is different from the three previous plays both in structure and in style. Characterization is sharper and the lyrical element is predominant. In these points and in the manipulation of the plot the influence of the author's youngest brother may be safely presumed. The verse portion came from the pen of the latter, and presumably also some of the humorous scenes. After *Svapnamayī* Jyotirindranath's only original work was a farce, *Hite Viparīt* (A Reversal to a Good Action, 1896), and two musical playlets (1900). His original works, however, are far outnumbered by his translations. He translated into Bengali (1899-1904) almost all the important Sanskrit plays, including those of the newly discovered Bhāsa, and two plays from English, one of which is Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* (1907). From French he translated two farces of Moliere, *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (under the title *Haṭhāt Nabāb,* 1881) and *Marriage forcé* (under the title *Dāye Poḍe Dāragraha,* 1902).

His prose works include some essays, a great deal of translation from French, some from English and a little from Marathi. It was he who introduced to the Bengali readers the French masters such as Maupassant, Merimé, Gautier, Loti and others.

MELODRAMA proper was introduced by Upendranath Das, the actor-director of the Great National Theatre (1875-76)

and author of the lampoon that was responsible for the enactment of the Dramatic Performances Control Act in December '76. In the two plays of Das, *Śarat-sarojinī* (1874) and *Surendra-vinodinī* (1875), patriotism and romance are garnished with the sensationalism of a thriller. The plot of *Surendra-vinodinī* is partially based on fact. Both the plays were very successful on the stage, specially the latter. His other play *Dādā O Āmi* (1887), based on the English play *Brother Bill and I,* was written when he was in England. Das brought new vigour to the public stage.

Rajkrishna Ray (1852-94) possessed uncommon facility in writing prose and verse, specially the latter. He had talent, but had little opportunity to cultivate it. He received practically no schooling and from his early days had to depend on his pen for his living at a time when writing as a profession was worse than precarious. Ray had run a theatre where the impersonation of female characters was done by young boys. Many of his plays were written for this stage. Ray's serious plays have for their theme devotional stories from the Purāṇas. In this way he was partly responsible for approximating the public stage to the popular *Yātrā* show.

Ray's first attempts were two musical playlets, *Pativratā* (1875) on the Sāvitrī-Satyavān story and *Nāṭyasambhav* (1876) on the creation of the drama by the sage Bharata. Then came his serious plays on the various Purāṇa stories, of which five were based on the *Rāmāyaṇa.* The theme of two was taken from history. These plays were very successfully staged in the Bengal Theatre and elsewhere. *Prahlād-caritra* created a box-office record. He also wrote a score of light farcial sketches. In *Haradhanurbhaṅga* (The Snapping of the Bow of Śiva, 1881), a play written in less than a week, Ray introduced the irregular free verse which was soon to be improved in the hands of Girischandra Ghosh. Ray popularized on the stage some romantic tales from Persian and Urdu.

Rajkrishna Ray was an untiring versifier. His books of poems number more than a score, excluding translations of

the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* and he conducted for some years a monthly poetry magazine entitled *Vīṇā* (1885). He wrote a couple of novels, and produced some tales in prose and verse. More remarkable are his experiments in irregular free verse and extended rhymed verse and his half-hearted attempts at prose-poems. Ray was a man of ideas but had no opportunity to employ his talents properly.

GIRISCHANDRA GHOSH (1844-1911), the most renowned among the playwrights and actors for the Bengali stage, was associated with the public theatre from its very inception in December 1872 and was connected some time or other with most of the playhouses established since. Soon after the establishment of his reputation as a talented actor, the requirements of the stage induced him to set up the romances of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the poems of Michael Madhusudan Dutt and others as stage plays ('73-75). In '77 he started writing short operas or musical plays. Serious drama was taken up from '81 when he wrote his first original work *Ānanda Raho* (Be of Good Cheer) which he called a 'historical play'. It was neither historical nor much of a play, and it did not succeed. Ghosh then took to semi-devotional plays based on mythological tales, and *Rāvaṇvadh* (Killing of Rāvaṇ) was written in the same year. The devotional strain gradually gained the upper hand and subordinated the dramatic interest in his plays based on the life and activities of some saints and avatars ('84-89), of which the best is *Buddhadevcarit* (1885). It was based on Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia.* Next came tragic plays, domestic and mythological. The best of these, according to a consensus of opinion, is *Praphulla* (1891). The domestic tragedy of this play has suffered from exaggeration and overdoing of the sobstuff. The last group of Ghosh's plays (1905-11) breathe patriotism reflected in the contemporary Swadeshi movement. The dominant note was not of fiery activity and vindictiveness but of sober adherence to the ancient ideal of

forbearance, which indicates the influence of Vivekananda's teachings.

Ghosh was an indefatigable playwright ; and his plays, numbering about four score and sustained mainly by his own acting and direction, were very successful on the stage. He knew exactly what was demanded by his audience. The general audience found the stage entertainment good if the play and the play-acting verged on the sentimental, spiced with mild sarcasm and spaced by suitable songs. Ghosh's plays conformed to the literary taste of his audience and contained nothing to ruffle their mental plumes. It should not be forgotten that his plays were written at the time when a kind of reformed Hinduism found favour among a large section of the educated Bengalees.

Ghosh's social plays are concerned with the lower middle class life of Calcutta. But he touched only the fringe of this life ; the inner man eluded him, and the tragedy is almost always melodramatic. The real problems of the middle class family life as also the vital elements in the character of an individual with its inhibitions and proclivities escaped the playwright. Ghosh wrote only for the stage that cared for an audience which insisted that the play should be well worth the ticket purchased. From this point of view his plays were always successful.

Amritlal Bose (1853-1929) was another playwright, although of a different calibre, who was connected with the public stage from the very beginning and maintained the connection till the last. Bose was a comedian, in play-acting as well as in play-writing. He received direct inspiration from the farces of Jyotirindranath Tagore but was not insensible to the coarser influence of Indranath Banerji's burlesques and satires in prose and verse. Speaking generally, Bose helped much in directing the public stage humour to a better form and to a more enjoyable course. One or two of Bose's farces are based on Molière's comedies ; e.g. *Kṛpaṇer Dhan* (The Miser's Money, 1900) is based on

L'avare. *Corer Upar Bāṭpāṛī* (A Thief Robbed, 1876) is based on a story of Boccaccio. The rest have as their theme incidents of topical interest. His best farces are, however, directed against social incongruities and perversities and personal idiosyncracies. The most typical work of this type is *Vivāha bibhrāṭ* (A Marriage Imbroglio, 1884). It paints brightly the snobbery of half-educated Bengalee young men and young women in their ridiculous attempts to show off their veneer of anglicized culture. At the same time the other side of the picture is not neglected; the hungry attempts of the father of a marriageable son just returned from England to extract heavy dowry from the bride's father are splashed in lurid colour.

Bose wrote some romantic plays. The earliest of these is *Hīrakcūrṇa* (The Diamond Dust, 1875). It is based on a contemporary political affair, the alleged attempt on the part of the then Gaikwar of Baroda to kill the British resident officer by putting diamond dust in his wine cup. In the later romantic plays the comic element however predominates. Among these mention may be made of *Khās-dakhal* (Direct Possession, 1911) and *Navayauvan* (Early Youth, 1913).

The plays of Bose lack the seriousness of Girischandra Ghosh. Bose was not a teacher but an entertainer, though the effect of his comedies was not negligible.

When Ghosh and Bose were in their heyday of activity, Rabindranath Tagore came out on his private family stage as the writer of musical plays and serious drama and also as an actor thereon. In composition and in production the works of Tagore were far superior to anything that had been done before. But with the exception of a single play, *Rājā O Rāṇī* (The King and the Queen, 1889), none of Tagore's plays were put up on the public stage till very late. *Rājā O Rānī* was a complete stage success but naturally its popularity was limited. The performance of *Rājā O Rānī* indicated an uplifting of the stage-craft in Calcutta. But

the effect did not last, as the plays of Tagore thereafter were *non sunt* for the Bengali public theatre for more than a quarter of a century. Tagore's influence as a play-actor on some of the best actors of the day was acknowledged by Amritlal Bose in one of his poems in *Amṛtamadirā* (The Wine of the Immortal, 1903).

DWIJENDRA LAL RAY (1863-1913), or D. L. Ray as he was generally known, was an administrative officer of the Government and had been sent to Britain to receive training in agriculture. As a playwright he followed in the footsteps of Bose. His first play was a burlesque, *Kalki Avatār* (The Last Prophet, 1895). It is written in free verse of the nursery rhyme variety and it contained some comic songs which in his later farces also form the best entertaining part of the play as well the best enduring item of his literary productions. Two of the serious plays of D. L. Ray are based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* and one on the *Mahābhārata* (entitled *Bhīṣma* and published posthumously in 1913). The *Rāmāyaṇa* plays, *Pāṣāṇī* (The Petrified Woman, 1900) and *Sītā* (1902), are written in verse. The first is written entirely in the free metre after the manner of Rabindranath Tagore. The play may be taken as a very modern version of the story of Indra's seduction of Ahalyā. The influence of Girischandra Ghosh is noticeable in characterization. The songs are obvious imitations of Tagore. The other play, *Sītā,* written in rhymed verse, is undoubtedly the best play that he ever wrote.

Tārābai (1903) and *Sorāb-Rostam* (1908) are rather melodramatic poems than plays. The story of the first is taken from Rajput history. Songs feature largely in both, specially in the later. Influence of Tagore is apparent in the free verse of *Sorāb-Rostam.* No serious attempt has been made to maintain the exotic atmosphere of the theme.

The later plays of D. L. Ray are written in prose and their stories are taken from Rajput history. The influence of the two melodramas of Upendranath Das is undoubtedly

present. There are some songs of which the tunes were made up by the author (who had real gift for music) from European music and they enhanced the popularity of these plays which were very successful on the stage. Patriotism of the sentimental variety is the keynote of these pseudo-historical plays. The best of the 'historical' plays of Ray is *Śājāhān* (1910), as it shows the least of the author's besetting sins as a playwright It must be said to Ray's credit that his plays went a long way to remove from the public stage the stale atmosphere of the tearful tragedy and the sticky religiosity.

Kshirod Prasad Vidyavinod (1863-1927), a professor of chemistry at a Calcutta college, first appeared as a writer of musical plays and operas in 1895. One of these is *Ālibābā* (1897). It is based on the very well-known tale from the *Arabian Nights*. *Ālibābā* may be called the evergreen operatic play of the Bengali public stage and its popularity does not seem to have suffered much even after half a century since its first appearance. The author had the happy inspiration of reviving the old time comic figures that appeared in the beginning and at intervals in the *Yātrā* performances. But he put them in a new garb. The music (by Purnachandra Ghosh) and dance (by Nripendrachandra Bose) matched well. The play made history in the chronicles of the public stage in Bengal.

Vidyavinod wrote very many plays, musical, historical, devotional, comic and romantic. He did not go in for the social drama. In all his plays the story interest is taken full care of, and in his devotional and puranic plays the overmuch importance of the religious and moral value of the plot is subordinated to the romantic interest, thereby improving the dramatic quality. He was a judiciously partial imitator of both Girischandra Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore. He followed the former in the technique and the latter in the plot-making. The best instance is *Raghuvīr* (1903), a *Rāmāyaṇa* play. His first play *Phulśayyā* (Bridal Bed, 1894)

is a pseudo-historical play in the free metre following mainly the plays of Rabindranath. His last play *Ratneśvarer Mandire* (In the Temple of Ratneśvar, 1922) shows the influence of the newly arrived technique of the Cinema. The story however is original.

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THE ROMANTICS

IT was the Sanskrit Collegean Biharilal Chakravarti (1834-94) who produced poetry out of his own necessity and not from any outside motivation or constructive impulse. He belonged to a Calcutta family and read Sanskrit not so much as a scholar but as a lover of poetry. He was profoundly influenced by Vālmīki and Kālidāsa. He knew English but did not read much of it at school, which was fortunate inasmuch as English poetry did not overwhelm him as it did Michael Madhusudan Dutt and others. At the same time he had a deep understanding of the older poets of Bengali literature. These factors combine to make Chakravarti a poet entirely different from his contemporaries, not to say from his predecessors.

Chakravarti's first book of verse was a century of songs written in the old-fashioned way. Then he started a magazine named *Pūrṇimā* (1858) and on its discontinuation another entitled *Abodhbandhu* (The Friend of the Ignorant) which ran for four years (1866-69). His poems and prose writings first appeared in the pages of these magazines. *Bandhuviyoga* (The Passing Away of a Friend, 1863) in four cantos deplores the loss of the poet's first wife and three of his boyhood friends. The poems follow the pattern of Īśvarcandra Gupta, and the only remarkable thing is the expression of the poet's deep love for his native land and its poetry. The next poem *Prempravāhiṇī* (The Stream of Love, 1863) does not show much improvement in diction but it breathes a quality that is new. The poet, sorely disappointed in life and in love, found escape in the pursuit of poetry. When the lamp was lit within, the poet felt thus:

> Now the universe is lighted up by an intangible light; the heart overflowing raises a paean of the unknown. By and by the noise of the crowd dies down, and a sweet

> note of the flute pervades all. My mind is sinking in the sea of sweetness, and my body is soaring in ecstatic impulse.

The poet's condemnation of the high-handed literary critics of the day and the much-lauded versifiers is unequivocal and expresses his reaction to the treaders of the traditional path:

> They lick the plate finished by others; they have none of their own, yet they are the dictators, the leaders of Bengal. The path of poetry their mind has never traversed, but they would have the poets follow their lead. They have never known what sweetness is, but would like very much to dispense it.

Chakravarti's third poem *Nisarga-sandarśan* (An Excursion with Nature, 1869) is divided into eight cantos. It recounts the poet's reaction to the devastating cyclone that passed over Calcutta in early November of 1867. The verse lines rhyme alternately and form quadruplets. The diction is simple, and the poet's experiment with the metrical pattern is not devoid of promise. Nature and man have taken the entire canvas, and the poet's self is in the background. The next poem *Vaṅgasundarī* (The Bengal Beauties, 1869) bears the first impress of Chakravarti's romantic lyricism. In the second edition (1880) a new poem *Surabālā* (The Divine Girl) was added as the third canto. This poem is really an introduction to his next and best book of poetry. It shows a marked improvement on the triverse appearing in the other cantos written long before. The 'divine discontent' of the poet's heart finds expression in the first canto. The second canto is a hymn to the eternal woman presented variously in mythological majesty and gracefulness. The third paints the image of the poet's 'divine girl' and follows the career of her disappointed lover who is made by his family to marry a girl of their own choice. The fourth speaks

of the woman who passes the best part of her life within the four walls of the inner apartments doing the same household duties year in year out. At long last she finds a path of escape in books which she had learnt to read only lately. But there is no chance of escape from the prison of her daily life, and it is too late. The fifth canto describes the pitying girl. A group of thatched cottages had caught fire and the girl was watching it with distressful eyes from a window of her home. The sixth decants the poet's suppressed pity for a young girl who had been given in marriage to an aged and uncouth man. The next three cantos are rather cheerful in tone; they record the poet's admiring contemplation of his beloved wife viewed as a companion, a loving wife and a young mother respectively.

Chakravarti's best known poem is *Śāradāmaṅgal* (The Divine Song of Poetic Inspiration, 1879).[1] The name indicates the poet's liking for old Bengali poetry although in form and in spirit the poem is entirely different from anything that had been yet written in the language. *Śāradāmaṅgal* has an inchoate, amorphous and elusive theme. It is the poet's attempt at capturing his ideal and source of inspiration in a tangible form in his contemplation and imagination. The thoughts of the poet are unstable as well as immature and incoherent. His fancy is volatile and his imagery has a thin quality of unreality and the transient colourfulness of a half-formed rainbow. The feeling of joyousness has taken complete possession of the poet's mental process. All these factors have gone to make the diction of *Śāradāmaṅgal* sometimes unsmooth, often inarticulate and occasionally incomprehensible. It is at best a poem in the making.

In the first canto the poet retraces the experience of Vālmīki when a fowler's arrow killed the male bird and

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[1] The poem was begun in 1870 and published incomplete in a monthly in 1874. It was completed at the instance of the wife of Jyotirindranath Tagore.

released the hidden spring of sorrow and poetry in the sage's heart. In the second canto the poet's fancy, like Rādhā of the Vaishnav poets, has gone out in search of his lost love, that is joyousness (*ānanda*).

The third canto echoes the inner conflict through which the poet's Self was passing. The goal is revealed in a moment but in the next a blank wall is confronted. This play of hide and seek is very tantalizing. In the fifth and last canto the poet's quest leads him to the lofty peaks of the Himalayas where he reaches his goal, that is beatific joy (*ānanda*).

Sādher Āsan (The Cherished Cushion, 1888-89), the only other notable poem of Chakravarti, is something of a sequel to *Śāradāmaṅgal*. The name of the poem bears the germ of its genesis, and thereby hangs a tale. The poet was a personal friend of Dwijendranath Tagore and a valued friend of the Tagore family. Jyotirindranath Tagore's wife was an ardent admirer of Chakravarti's poetry. As a token of her admiration she had presented the poet with a woollen cushion knit by herself. She demanded a poem in return. Chakravarti duly began his poem, but after producing only three stanzas he forgot all about it. After her untimely death he remembered his unrequited promise and completed the poem in ten cantos with an epilogue. The poem opens with a vision of beauty that underlies the various experiences of life and contemplation and which is the all-embracing pattern of man's ideal. The poet then goes back to his bygone days and he feels once again the loves and joys of boyhood and early manhood. It brings him to the garden-land of paradise lying on the threshold of heaven, where the love for his beloved leads him to universal love.

> I love man and woman,
> I love the universe, movable and immovable,
> I love my Self, I joyfully exist.

He meets the departed soul of a loving wife on her way to heaven. A tear-drop from her eyes satisfies the parching soul

of the poet. She passed in through the gates of heaven, but the poet found them barred against him. The soul of the poet then finds solace in the contemplation of divine beauty that finds manifold expression in form and content, action and thought. The poet then pays his homage to her who had led him to finish *Śāradāmaṅgal* and inspired him to write the present poem, as she was to him the earthly image of the goddess of poesy.

The group of romantics led by Biharilal Chakravarti was distinguished not only by their intense subjectivity but also by their stress on love, specially woman's love and on other sentimental ties. Their attitude to the urgent social problems was different from that of the other group of contemporary poets who may be conveniently, though not properly, called classicists. It is strange that the latter who were mainly English educated reacted unfavourably to the advanced ideas of the social reformers and theorists, and their support for widow-remarriage and women's emancipation, for instance, was at best mechanical and half-hearted. The romanticists, on the other hand, were not collegeans and they were never eloquent on social reform but their support for reform was spontaneous and enthusiastic. The classisists thought of womanhood in general as inferior beings but very necessary for biological purposes, if not always the sinful decoy of hell as the rhymers of the old school declared.

Surendranath Majumdar (1838-78) may be called a semi-romanticist, although he began his literary career as a classicist writer of verse. His best poem is *Mahilā*[2] (The Woman) written in 1870-71 and published posthumously in two parts (1880, 1883). The poem is no doubt inspired by Chakravarti's *Vaṅgasundarī* and is in four sections, the first of which is introductory and the other three devoted to the aspects of womanhood revealed to a man in his family life:

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[2] The poet did not complete the poem nor did he give any name to it. The title was supplied by his younger brother Devendranath Majjumdar who published it.

the mother, the wife and the sister. The last section is unfinished; only four stanzas were written. The poet believes that it is the woman that has made man what he is today and that will finally lead him on to heaven. In the section praising the wife the poet has revealed the depth of his passion. He avers that after death his departed spirit would hover near his beloved and would impregnate the life around her with the essence of his love:

> When of an evening you would light the lamp and, screening it from the breeze with the hem of your skirt, would take it out and look at its red, slender flame, you should know that I, in a glow of love, am trembling in that flame, and am impatient to kiss you.

Like Chakravarti Majumdar was well read in Sanskrit. His diction is Sanskritic and terse. *Mahilā* is written in seven-lined stanzas. Other longer poems are not remarkable but some of his short poems are good pieces of poetry. Unfortunately these have not yet been compiled in a book. Majumdar wrote some prose articles, and he translated a goodly portion of Tod's *Rajasthan* (1873-78). He tried his hand at play-writing also. The historical drama *Hāmir* (published posthumously in 1881) was well received on the stage.

Dwijendranath Tagore (1840-1926) was a man of many-sided genius, almost like his younger brother Rabindranath Tagore. His interests ranged from mathematics to music and from philosophy to shorthand writing. He could sketch well and was uncommonly clever in making cardboard boxes. But nothing claimed his attention for long except philosophy, and the result was that the potentiality of his manifold talent remained undeveloped. The poetic impulse came to him only intermittently. But for all that he was one of the masters of Bengali prose and produced a poem which is absolutely unique.

Dwijendranath translated *Meghadūta* (1860) and the translation was very well received. Then he wrote a few devotional and patriotic songs and rendered his father's 'Manual of Brahmoism' (*Brāhmadharma*) into Bengali verse. His great poem, great in the sense that it is a masterpiece of imaginative construction, *Svapnaprayāṇ* (The Dream Adventure) was written in 1873-74 and published in 1875. It is an allegorical poem and can be compared with *Faerie Queene* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is neither a spiritual poem nor a romantic tale in verse. As Rabindranath Tagore has said, it is like a huge edifice of many terraces of dreamlike allegories, with towering facades, painted halls, carved galleries and ornamental parks around. Boldness in imagery is sustained by equal boldness in design as well as in rythm, rhyme and diction. Like his friend Chakravarti, Dwijendranath did not hesitate to couple the colloquial with the non-colloquial and the 'poetic' expression with the 'non-poetic'. The result is completely satisfactory which Chakravarti's was not. Above all, the semi-serious mood of Dwijendranath has imparted a quality of sharp objectivity and palpableness to the dream-woven traceries of the allegories.

'The Dream Adventure' puts its allegorical theme in the outline pattern of a folk-tale. The soul of the poet, in deep slumber as it were, comes out of the confines of the body in search of adventures, like the young prince in popular tales. When 'conciousness was engulfed by oblivion of sleep like the burning lump of the sun dropping down at the end of the sea-line' the Dream Maid came to unlock the chamber of the mind. The chariot of thought came down the milky way and the poet (that is, his soul) got into it. Miss Fancy, the charioteer, started the chariot for Thought-Land. Fancy dropped the poet at Joytown the capital of Thought-Land and departed. Separated from Fancy the poet lost all interest in his adventure. Soon Friendship came forward and gave a short account of the land and of the ruling house. Service offered him refreshments. Presently the poet had a call from

King Joy. Friendship took him to the king who welcomed him as a long-lost friend.

The palace of King Joy seemed to the poet like a known place, almost his own home of the forgotten childhood days. The king told Friendship to take the poet round. After that Fancy (she was really the daughter of King Joy) took charge of him and led him to the temple of Queen Compassion (*Māyā*)[3] situate in a deep forest. As soon as they stepped into the forest the scene changed abruptly.

> Unlatching the south gate, the prince of the seasons, in a slow and soft gait, stepped into the forest region, and made the creepers flower down to their joints and draped them in the garb of new leaves. Nobody knew why the aimless Breeze from the South came out of his chamber. He moved the veils of the flowers and cadged their fragnance, and then he was disappointed and sighed, saying, 'This is not she'.

The poet met Compassion who bore the look of his mother. She found him unchanged and shed a few drops of tears over him. Her playful companion Activity (*Rājasī*) painted the poet's eyes with the collyrium of inspiration, and the poet was lost to his surroundings. Presently the other companion of Compassion, Darkness (*Tāmasī*) came in and the poet's contemplation was instantly interrupted. The dispirited poet set sail with Friendship for Pleasuretown where Prince Pleasure the son of King Joy was amusing himself. As soon as they met the poet knew him to be a boyhood friend of his. The Prince recollected him fully when he had introduced himself in these lines:

> Where Truth[4] and Gold[4] shine, where the Strong One[4] is about, where Virtue[5] and Brilliance[4] dispel the dark-

[3] Literally, creative illusion. There is a subtle pun. In Bengali it usually means compassionate love as of a mother. The poet had just lost his mother.

[4] Satya, Hem, Vīr, Jyoti, Ravi, Som: the poet's younger brothers.

[5] Guṇ (i.e. Gunendranath): his cousin.

> ness of the mind, where the Sun[4] and the Moon[4] shine with new effulgence—it is that Divine[6] dwelling this poet brightens.

The prince then commanded Voluptuousness to sing and dance. One of her songs reminded the poet of his boyhood favourites. When it was finished the poet put on Voluptuousness the garland that Fancy had given him. Humour carried this tale to Fancy who was much offended. The poet's attention was now diverted by a terrible incident. Heroism had rescued a lady from the clutches of the king of the nether region. As she was being taken to the ladies' quarters in the palace of the prince the demons came out in disguise and snatched her away. Doubly distressed the poet seeking solace from Mother Nature left the court of the prince and the company of Friendship. He strayed into the wilderness of Depression. Winding his unguided steps and experiencing nightmarish thrills the poet approached Depression-town. He was captured by Sorrow and Sickness the two patrolmen of Immobility and was led to the presence of the demon king Depression. The residence of the demon king loomed large and menacing from a distance.

> The castle, huge and lofty, came into view. Its flanking walls were in ruins, but its tall towers proclaimed majesty. Through the delapidated windows draught had free play.

An evil owl watched from the top of the colonnade. The king took his seat in the assembled court. Before the trial of the prisoners began, the king took his minister to task for his lack of enthusiasm in doing his duties. He said:

> You are like Vishnu, lying in His eternal bed all the time. You wake up for a while only on the pay day.

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[4] See *ante*.
[6] Dev (i.e. Devendranath): his father.

To this charge

> The minister replied: O king, what pay is like I have not known for the last three years.

The king was pat with his retort.

> The king said: 'All my men are lean and thin, but you alone are growing into a hillock of flesh as I see. You were once only bones, but now you are an elephant. If you had received your pay the world ere long would have come to an end for you.

The poet was charged as a spy of Prince Pleasure and so was condemned to be offered as a sacrifice to the goddess Kālī. But on the point of imminent death he was rescued by the goddess Mercy. The poet then witnessed a fight between the opposing forces of Heroism and Terror and finally the defeat of the latter. The poet was terrified and distressed, and he invoked the aid of Mercy who made him over to the charge of Good Company. Good Company guided him to Austerity Hill. There the poet received from Restraint patience as a coat of mail and from Tranquility knowledge as an axe. He then pushed his way up the hill. The sorrows of the human world he was leaving behind were tugging him back at every step. The poet now felt keenly for human sympathy and for universal love which was nowhere to be found. But Good Company sustained his hopes and his tasks brought solace to him.

> You are a poet. Why should you be sorrowful? If you receive pain at heart you should speak out and make it heard by all. On hearing that even a playful, mercurial child would stop playing and would sit down quietly. He also would be moved by the sentiment and his dark eyes would be liquid. You are a bird of the forest. Why do you then cry piteously? You are ever a wild bird, and so you would be for all time.

> I am speaking of that wilderness, the wilderness that talks face to face with the wind and is not afraid of storms and thunder, that is not enclosed by the fence of the horizon, that takes its stand all by itself and holds its ever joyous branches up into the space.

The poet realized peace. He returned to the domain of King Joy and was wedded to Princess Fancy. The dream adventure of the poet, the quest of his soul, thus came to an end.

Dwijendranath Tagore wrote a narrative poem in light vein. The poem, entitled *Yautuk nā Kautuk* (Is it a Dowry or a Fun? 1883), was dedicated to Rabindranath Tagore on the occasion of the latter's marriage. Fun and seriousness spun together in a free and easy lightness of style has rendered the poem particularly interesting. Other poems of his are mostly short humorous verses intended mainly for private consumption. But they show his command of the language and mastery over the metre. One of his singular achievements in Bengali prosody is the employment of some of the difficult syllabic metres of Sanskrit in colloquial versification. His monograph on Bengali shorthand writing (*Rekhākṣar-varṇamālā* 1912) written in verse is a monument of ingeniousness as well as a metrical wonder.

As a writer of prose Dwijendranath was equally distinguished. The style of his *Gītāpāṭh* (Discourse on the Gītā, 1915) and other philosophical essays is inimitable. He could draw well, as the whimsical drawings in some of his private letters show. He was interested in music. He was the first to introduce the piano in Bengal.

DEVENDRANATH SEN (1855-1920) was a Romantic although his partial affiliation to the classicists cannot be seriously doubted. It was the woman (as also the child) that claimed his entire homage. His style too is not high or stiff. But Sen could not shake off the influence of the style of Michael

Madhusudan Dutt's sonnets; it has left its indelible mark on the frequent use of parenthesis and in classical allusions.

Sen was an advocate practising for some time at the district court of Ghazipore and then at the High Court in Allahabad. In his poetry the flora of his place of residence has received an adequate homage. Sen's earliest works were three very short books of poems published in 1880. *Aśok-guccha* (The Cluster of Asoka, 1901) was the first representative anthology of his poetry. Other poems published in the monthlies were collected in a dozen books all published together in 1911. The titles of these end in the word 'guccha' (Sen was a lover of flowers): *Golāp-guccha, Śephālī-guccha, Pārijāt-guccha,* etc. Others are *Apūrva Naivedya, Apūrva Śiśumaṅgal, Apūrva Vrajāṅganā,* etc. Some of these books contain as appendix English versions of some of the poems.

Sen's was an essentially poet's mind, and his best poetry is on love. But it is married and domestic love. The poet was always partial to the woman and to the child. There was a religious streak in him which became manifest towards the end of his career. Sen was an admirer of Rabindranath Tagore and was always sympathetic to the young writers of verse. He used to come often to Calcutta and stay for some time, when a small coterie of young writers would surround him.

Govindachandra Das (1855-1918) also was a poet of domestic love. But unlike Sen's his poems do not breathe exclusively domestic happiness and ideals of married love; flesh moved him as much as sentiment and association. It was daring and new note in Bengali poetry when Das wrote:

> I love her wholly, her bones and flesh too, for the charms of that woman, for the stones of her flesh, which is but a desirable bathing pool of sexual hunger. In that mud, in that slime, I am ever delighted to wallow like the

serpent Kāliya. I love her wholly, her bones and flesh as well.

Das had no acquaintance with English literature. Of his contemporaries only Devendranath Sen seems to have influenced him. Das's feeling was genuine and strong, and he had bitter experience of life. He had unmistakable talent. All this made his poetry sincere, pungent and sometimes compelling. But his style was old fashioned and inadequate, and expression was not always artistic. He belonged to East Bengal and some of his poems breathe the fragrance of his native land.

Das's best poems were collected in several books of poems published between 1887 and 1905, viz. *Prem O Phul* (Love and Flower, 1887), *Kumkum* (1891), *Kastūrī* (1895), *Candan* (1896), *Vaijayantī* (1905), etc.

Akshay Kumar Baral (1865-1918) was a close follower of Biharilal Chakravarti but his poetry does not show the looseness of style and the ecstatic effervescence of sentiment of his master. On the other hand, it lacks Chakravarti's spontaneity. Baral's inspiration did not come mainly from the spring of married love and domesticity as in Devendranath Sen's poetry, but it transcended the four walls of daily life. Like Govindachandra Das, Baral was essentially an emotional poet, but unlike the former his poetry is not so much passionate as intellectual and therefore somewhat less real. The influence of Rabindranath Tagore's early lyrics is noticeable in some of Baral's poems but it was more or less imitation and did not go very deep. Browning was one of Baral's favourite poets, and the English poet's influence has left its stamp on the style of the Bengali poet and also in his faith in the ultimate goodness of creation. Economy of expression and meticulousness in the choice of words are the outstanding characteristics of Baral's diction. He could not do away with parenthesis completely.

Baral's first book of poems *Pradīp* (The Lamp) was

published in 1885 and his last *Eṣā* (The Quest) in 1912. The last is *in memoriam* to his departed wife. The poet has succeeded here in translating the deep sorrow of loss and bereavement into an impersonal real thing.

> This blackness in the foolish heart—it is the wisp of smoke in the blaze of the fire of sacrifice to Thee—which, consuming the narrowness and deficiency is reaching heaven!

ALTHOUGH they do not belong to the Romantic group the women poets of the period may be briefly discussed here. Their common outlook was objectivity. Girindramohini Dutt (1854-1924) wrote much, and she was in touch with the literary atmosphere of the Tagore family. Her best pieces are the short poems that record her girlhood reminiscences of village life and her impressions of Calcutta landscape. Her bibliography includes the following titles: *Kavitāhār* (Garland of Poetry, 1873), *Bhārat-kusum* (Flower of India, 1882) *Aśrukaṇā* (A Speck of Tears, 1887), *Ābhāṣ* (1890), *Arghya* (1902), etc.

Swarna Kumari Devi, the novelist, wrote indifferent verse. But it was she who had first introduced the romantic ballad in Bengali, four of which are compiled in *Gāthā* (1890).

Kamini Ray (1884-1933) was the first among the contemporary women poets to be impressed deeply by the style of Rabindranath Tagore's poetry. But temperamentally she belonged to the classicists rather than to the romantics. Her poetry is objective but not always impersonal. The woman's heart of the poet is revealed in her poetry with all the characteristic shyness and inhibition. There is a running note of faint regret and disappointment but she is never rebellious.

> Let be, my dearest, my eternal life full of darkness,
> if indeed on my path for all eternity light falls.

Mrs. Ray's first and best book of poems *Ālo O Chāyā* (Light and Shadow) was published in 1889 with an introduction by Hemchandra Banerji the reigning poet of the day. Her next book *Mālya O Nirmālya* (Garland and Flower Offerings, 1913) is also good. It contains some pieces written in her early life (1880) as well as her latest (1913). Tagore's influence became more effective in her later books (1901-30).

DWIJENDRALAL RAY the playright will be remembered by the posterity mainly for his comic songs. He wrote quite a number of poems collected in books published between 1882 and 1912; viz. *Āryagāthā* in two parts (1882, 1893), *Āṣāḍhe* (1898), *Mandra* (1902), *Ālekhya* (1907) and *Triveṇī* (1912). His best poems are characterized by a freedom in style and metre and by a light mood. But they generally suffer from a marked want of sustained effort and polish.

22

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

In stature, stride and sweep Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is an all-round creative genius the like of whom has seldom been seen, if at all, in any country. His poetry shows such finesse in form, matter and feeling as was otherwise incomprehensible in our language. It is in no way a sequence of the new poetry of the school of Michael Madhusudan Dutt nor of the romantic poetry of Biharilal Chakravarti. It was all his own. And yet he was rooted in the soil of his land. He had drunk deep from the mainsprings of Indian poetry: the native and grand but certainly not primitive mysticism of the Upanishads, the delicate tracery of Kālidāsa and the emotional music of the Vaishnav poets. He is the most Indian of the Indian poets as well as the most universal. He was always open to receive from every quarter and from every source—from English poetry to Bengali nursery rhyme, from the most elaborate classical symphony to the simplest rustic tune. But whatever he received he made his own; he was incapable of imitation.

Tagore was a very well-read man and he had keen interest in everything human having a permanent value. He could indeed say with Terence: *Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum puto* ('I am a man, nothing human can be alien to me'). But he is never exotic, and pedantry in any form was unknown to him. Tagore's poetry is as much Bengali poetry as Indian, and much of it is as much Indian as universal, because he has gone to the deepest where the stream of eternal life flows, the ultimate source of creation and continuation of life in every form. Tagore's poetry is universal not only in the sense that the essence of all true poetry is universal but also in the sense that the notation is universal from the Indian point of view.

Tagore passed his boyhood days at home but he periodically felt an irresistible urge for going out, far and near.

He travelled all over the civilized world, and was received everywhere with warmth and spontaneous welcome ; he was accorded receptions beyond the expectation of a foreign potentate. He produced poetry in every land, wherever he went. But he always liked to return to his corner at Santiniketan, a tiny settlement in a dreary spot in West Bengal, a hundred miles away from his ancestral home in Calcutta with its civilized comforts.

Tagore's personality was polyhedric ; its many facets were opposite and complementary, not merely contradictory. He was a quiet thinker at most times but he was capable of quick decision and prompt action at a moment's notice. Of his power of organization and long-term planning Visva-Bharati is the best evidence.

The career of the poet's soul was a continuous game of hide and seek, idle fancy and ceaseless quest, incubation and fight, contemplation and realization. The metaphor of the alternating seasons was a favourite device in Tagore poetry ; for him it symbolized the universe that pulsates in alternative manifestation and disappearance, the nature that throbs between night and day and between life and death, and his own destiny swinging between the known and the unknown, between the realized and the unrealized, between the real and the unreal. So he speaks in a song:

> The dance-plays of Winter and Spring pull the swing of tears and smiles, and between them I shall ever carry the salver of my welcome songs. Is it thy pleasure and so thou hast made me wear the chaplet redolent with the perfume of music?
> It is perhaps why my sleep is banished ; the barrage of heart has given way, billows of a mad wind are stirring the woods of eternal pain, and the shadows and lights of my days and nights throb. Is it thy pleasure and so thou hast made me wear the chaplet redolent with the perfume of music?

> My night's lodging has not been secured; my day's labour is intermittent; in my service of no-duty I get no respite. There is, alas, no peace for me anywhere in the world, and my lyre sings as disturbance strikes it. The blazes of my life-consuming songs shall burn for ever. Is it thy pleasure and so thou hast made me wear the chaplet redolent with the perfume of music?

Lovers of modern European poetry should note that Tagore's attitude towards life was that of acceptance, appreciation and thankfulness and not of doubt, fretting and protest.

Tagore was home-bred. He had intermittent schooling for a very few years in Calcutta where his family had been settled for more than a century, and for about a year and some months in London. But he had been given at home a solid grounding in Bengali, Sanskrit and English as well as in the rudiments of science including anatomy. He was interested in music from childhood and had received training from some of the best music masters of the day. Wrestling was an item of his daily routine, and it made his healthy physique healthier. Before fifty he was never seriously ill. In a proper estimation of his poetry this fact should be taken into account. Tagore's poetry is the outcome of a very healthy mind in an uncommonly healthy and handsome body.

It was fortunate that school life was from the very beginning extremely distasteful to Tagore and he could not be weaned from his home education. The atmosphere of Tagore's home was charged with the live currents of cultural impulse, absorbent and creative. Devendranath Tagore's fascination for the doctrine of the Upanishads, his outlook of worshipful universality, his strong adherence to the fundamentals of Indian thought and culture and his enthusiasm for constructive nationalism had made his home the centre of cultural revival in India. This gave the family a dis-

tinctiveness which was manifest in all they did. The Tagores were different. Their outlook was Indian and not simply Bengali. The Tagores' journal was *Bhāratī* as against *Baṅgadarśan* of Chatterji.

Devendranath Tagore was the eldest son of a very rich man, but he had forced himself to live like a commoner for years rather than repudiate his father's commitments. When Rabindranath Tagore was born the family fortune had been recovered but the home life continued on a simple scale. Young Rabindranath was raised like an ordinary lower middle class boy minus the amenities. But there was a vital difference. Young Tagore did not have the social contacts available to a boy of the average lower middle class family of Calcutta. He was one of the youngest of his mother's fourteen issues, and his mother could not give him the attention she should have otherwise given. From his fourth or fifth year he was put in the care of servants. In his *Reminiscences* Tagore has told us how his servant in charge would keep him confined in a room, and how he would be contemplating for hours together the slice of the landscape visible from the window in a first floor room in the servants' quarter, and how his childhood fancies would ride on the clouds and run with the wind. The meditative mood and the unfettered fancy of the poet to be were made up here and thus.

Tagore had his first dose of literature from the lips of his caretakers and of some elderly members of the family retinue. They would read the poems of Kṛttivāsa and Kāśirām and would recite alliterative verses from Dāśarathi Rāy's poetry or they would sing lines from songs of Madhu Kān. The pathos of the Rāma story told by Kṛttivāsa, the wonder of the *Mahābhārata* tales told by Kāśirām, the jingle of the tripping lines of Dāśarathi's verse and the sweet sentimentality of Madhu Kān made the first impressions on the virgin field of the child's highly imaginative mind. The next literary impression was made by the recital of

Meghadūta by his eldest brother Dwijendranath. He did not know anything of Sanskrit yet, but the music of Kālidāsa's verses enthralled him. A few years later when he read the poem in the original he was doubly impressed, as he found in it an unmistakable echo of the adventurous fancy of his childhood when during the rainy days he watched the clouds through the window in the servants' quarter.

In the mean time the boy Tagore had scanned all by himself the metrically intricate songs of Jayadeva and had finished the readable books of Bengali prose including the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji (some of which were then coming out serially in *Baṅgadarśan*) and the Vaishnav lyric poems of Caṇḍīdāsa and Vidyāpati which had been just published. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's poetry did not impress young Tagore, and he was positively hostile to Dutt's *Meghanādvadh,* as his critical article published in *Bhāratī* proves. The reason is not far to seek. The poem was a textbook which his tutor at home, a pundit, had inflicted on him, and thus had left a bitter taste. English poetry he read with profit and enjoyment and was helped therein by Rajnarayan Bose and also by Akshaychandra Chaudhuri who was a deep lover of English literature and a poet himself. Of the contemporary Bengali poetry young Tagore admired his eldest brother's *Svapnaprayāṇ* and Biharilal Chakravarti's *Vaṅgasundarī* and *Śāradāmaṅgal.* Tagore was a great admirer of Chakravarti and he alone was responsible for the recognition of Chakravarti's poetry, but his own writings do not show any trace of its influence. On the other hand, Dwijendranath's influence went deep and lay submerged for more than half a century, only to emerge in a mellow form—the light poems and children's verses written in the last few years. A close study of the epistolary style of Tagore also reveals the influence of his eldest brother's literary style.

The Tagore family was the fountainhead of the 'national' movement that went hand in hand with the

cultural revival. So the earliest efforts of Tagore juvenilia were patriotic and the model of these poems was supplied by Hemchandra Banerji's poetry (particularly his *Bhārat-saṅgīt*). Tagore had his first real outing away from Calcutta when at the age of twelve he was taken by his father on a long tour up to the Himalayan Punjab. As a result the Himalayas featured in his early juvenile poems (1873-75) which are mainly romantic narratives of disappointed love. These poems show the influence of the poets, Indian and English, that he was then reading and admiring.

A more permanent result was obtained when the young aspirant to poetic fame took to imitating Vaishnav lyrics, specially the songs of Vidyāpati, after the manner of Thomas Chatterton in his *Rowley Poems*. The poems (or rather songs, as most of them were set to music) bear, after the manner of the Vaishnav poets, the signature of the poet in the last couplet and Tagore signed himself as 'Bhānu-Siṃha' or simply 'Bhānu'.[1] Appearing for the first time in *Bhāratī* (1877 *et seq.*) the 'Bhānu-Siṃha' poems created a stir in the literary world as they were then believed to have been recovered from an old manuscript of a forgotten Vaishnav poet. Naturally Tagore did not think much of these poems, but it must be admitted that they show a command of the form of Vaishnav poetry rarely noticeable after the seventeenth century. This apparent maturity in the immature young poet came from his metrical exercises on Jayadeva and his close and critical study of the poems of Vidyāpati and Govindadās.

Tagore's second elder brother Satyendranath, the first Indian civilian, took him to Ahmedabad and then sent him with his own family to England in September 1878. It was expected that Tagore would qualify himself for the Bar. But that was not to be. A classroom was something worse

[1] 'Bhānu' is a synonym of 'Ravi' (the sun) the first word in his name and 'Siṃha' stands for the surname Tagore (perhaps as an echo of 'Śiva-siṃha' in Vidyāpati's poetry).

than prison cell to him even in the free set-up of a foreign land, and he returned in February 1880 without adding anything to his qualifications. But the sojourn had not been fruitless. He met some people whose sympathy and character imparted warmth to his soul and helped him to overcome his diffidence and shyness. His brief attendance at the lectures of Professor Henry Morley in the University College, London stimulated him.

When he was still in England his poetry began to ring—though hesitatingly—a personal note, the true ring of lyric poetry. After his return this note became insistent. In *Sandhyā-saṅgīt* (The Evening Song, 1882), despite its immaturity and nebulousness, Tagore emerged as a poet not fully understood but definitely distinguished by an originality that baffled affiliation to any poet known to the critics of the day. The subject matter was amorphous; it echoed only the frustrations and frettings of the young poet's heart against himself for not being acceptable to the world and against the world for not being acceptable to him. Like a silkworm the poet was enmeshed in his emotional actions and reactions. But this dismal phase of emotional gloom was more a mood of adolescence than anything else and it passed off, as we see in the next book of poems, *Prabhāt-saṅgīt* (The Morning Song, 1883). The world now appeared to the poet as bathed in the glory of sunshine. The sights and sounds of the busy world from which he was so long banished appeared fresh and delightful to his avid eyes.

> I wish for nothing but to stay looking on the world, astounded, forgetting myself, and speak not a syllable.

The next book of poems, *Chabi O Gān* (Pictures and Songs, 1884) includes some poems and songs written earlier. Two poems, however, are very remarkable: *Rāhur Prem* (The Love of Eclipse the Demon) and *Ārta-svar* (A Cry in Agony). In the former, love's great hunger has found passionate expression; and in the latter the agony of

emotional urge is transformed into the turbulence of a dark and stormy night. The rainy season has a very special significance in the poetry of Tagore, and its first recognition appears in more than one poem in *Chabi O Gān*. The blazing noontide is another significant phenomenon, and this too first emerges here.

In between the poems of *Chabi O Gān* and the poems of the next book of verse *Kaḍi O Komal* (Sharps and Flats, 1886) the poet's soul has passed through purgatory, as it were, for a very dear friend who had stirred the hidden depths of his emotional being and had called forth the best in his poetry suddenly died, leaving an unnegotiable abyss in the heart of the young poet. The blow was stunning but it was needed for the development of his poetry. It shattered the sentimental make-believe of the young poet's self-centred fancy and helped him to gain a mental poise and an emotional centre of gravity. The sorrow that was only a personal bereavement became the symbolic bond of a spiritual union and it acted as the master key that opened up all the gates of perception, imagination, sympathy and revelation. The very important symbolic value of death in Tagore's poetry has its genesis here. The immediate effect of this bereavement was to make the poet more artistically conscious of his writings. This resulted in a mellowness in the poet's mood, in a freer appreciation of beauty, in a wider outlook on life and in a carefully mellifluent diction and metrical precision. Maturity was arriving at the first stage of Tagore's poetic art.

Kaḍi O Komal includes some of the best specimens of Tagore's passionate love poems. But the urge of the flesh has no permanent hold on the poet's passion.

> This infatuation persists for how few days ; this illusion dissolves, and nothing can keep the heart fast bound. The clasp of the soft arms is loosened, and the dreamy eyes no longer stimulate intoxication. One knows not

> the other on a dark night; when the flowering days are over birds do not sing.

The poems of *Mānasī* (The Desired She, 1890) reveal a clear maturity in Tagore's poetry. The period of musicality extending from 'The Evening Song' to 'The Sharps and Flats' is over. The poet is now faced with a clash between the ideas and the ideals. From this viewpoint the most typical and also the most distinguished poem—not only for the content but for the rugged, uneven and unrhymed verse too—is *Niṣphal Kāmanā* (The Hopeless Desire).

> The immortality that was latent in you, where is it now? As in the darkening sky of an evening and among the isolated stars throbs the boundless secret of heaven's light, so does tremble the flame of the secret of the soul in your eyes, under the depth of their compact darkness.

Some of the poems are bright portraits of life and nature. An instance of landscape pen-painting:

> The day is at an end but the afternoon lingers. At the end of the day the sun looks tired but does not like to take leave yet; he stays looking on at the earth and would not say goodbye. The day entangles itself in the stray clouds overhead; it lies scattered over the fields, it quivers on the waters of the river, it stands still, casting long shadows on the side of the tank and in the trek.

Some of the poems of *Mānasī* register the poet's disillusionment with some of our leaders of thought whom he had once admired. The dogmatic sentimentalism of the neo-Hindu revival invoked bitter sarcasm from his pen. The narrow and complacent life and outlook of the average city-dweller pained the poet whose vision sought light and boundless life. Tagore's reaction to their smugness is vocal

in one of his most pungent and impassioned poems, *Duranta Āśā* (The Boundless Desire). These poems were written at Ghazipore 400 miles up the Ganga from Calcutta.

Just before the publication of *Mānasī,* Tagore had made a very short trip to England *via* France (August-October 1890). A few months after his return he was placed in charge of the management of the family estate comprising extensive property in north central Bengal and in Orissa. Tagore had now to pass most of his days either in the manager's quarters at Silaidah, Sajadpur and other stations in the districts of Nadia and Pabna or on the boat in the rivers that flowed by those stations. This prolonged and intimate acquaintance (1891-97) with the riverine and rural life of Bengal brought the poet face to face with nature and man, and had a deep and wholesome influence on his work. The early poems of this period collected in *Sonār Tarī* (The Golden Boat, 1893) reflect the poet's impression of his first close contact with nature and appreciation of impersonal life. The name 'Golden Boat' is significant. The elusive 'Desired She' could be pursued only in a Golden Boat.

No less remarkable is the poet's observation and understanding of humanity in the poems in *Sonār Tarī* as well as in the contemporary short stories which show with surprising vigour and brilliance an understanding of life that is simple and poignant, fundamental and individual. The language of the poems is soft and simple, and what splendour is absent in the poetry is present in the prose. Allegory and the touch of the fairy tale in some poems indicate the relation they bear to the short stories, the genesis of which is referred to in the following lines from the poem *Varṣā-yāpan* (Passing the Rainy Months):

> Hundreds and hundreds of talks that could never be finished here, and all the buds that had withered before they could blossom, the lives unknown, the dust of unsung greatness—so many burdens, so much fear, so

> many mistakes are falling down day and night all around in the world, like the dribbles of the rains ; tears and laughters of the moment fall off in profusion, and I ever hear their rustling.

In the characteristic poems of *Sonār Tarī*, viz. *Yete Nāhi Diba* (I Won't Let You Go), *Samudrer Prati* (To the Sea), and *Vasundharā* (Earth The Treasurehold) the poet realizes through his own emotion the momentary life that is flowing on unceasingly and eternally with a longing and lingering look behind. The cry of his infant daughter, 'I won't let you go', when he was leaving home, echoed through time and space. It was the heart-breaking cry of Mother Earth for the sparks of life in her lap, which she cannot hold for long.

> It was as if the flute of Eternity was sobbing in a rustic note in the barren wilderness of the universe, and it made the Earth sad and sit up with her tresses dishevelled in the far-flung cornfields, on the banks of the Ganga, a sun-bright golden scarf drawn over her person, her unmoving eyes fixed on the far-off blue horizon, speechless. I saw that sorrowful sweet face of hers—standing close to the door-jamb, quiet and cut to the quick, like my daughter four years old.

In *Vasundharā* the poet delves deep. He feels in his heart-beats the primitive impulse of creative evolution and is vaguely conscious of his identity with the soul of the universe transcending time and space. It is a novel synthesis between the ancient Indian conception of pantheism (*brahma-vāda*) and the modern scientific theory of biological evolution. The whole poem breathes Tagore's intense love for the earth—the sights, sounds, smells, feelings, and emotions of life and nature against a shifting background of growth and decay.

> My earth thou art, for millions of years. In the dust thou hast kept me hidden, and in the infinite space,

with untired steps thou hast turned round and round the orb of the sun, . . . so now on a day, sitting alone and vacant, on the bank of the Padma, my enchanted eyes looking on, I sense through all my limbs and in all my mind how, deep in the crust, the tiny shoot of grass is shivering and shooting up.

The most significant are the first poem and the last. The first poem which lends its title to the book and which is one of the simplest but most variously interpreted poems of Tagore, contains a magnificent picture of the early rains on the banks of the Padma, a picture where sound and sight synchronize perfectly. The allegory is slight but significant. The larger and truer life of man is that which links him to the stream (that is, succession) of life which has created the world for him, and it is the immortal part of the individual. That part of the individual which has no significance for the larger life is his own personality which has no permanence. Before he starts on the quest of the ideal the poet prepares himself for the loss of much of his valuable gatherings for which there was no room in the Golden Boat of time. In the last poem, *Niruddeś Yātrā* (Voyage for the Unknown), the 'Desired She' has mysteriously taken charge of the Boat which was sailing westward to an unknown destination.

The last poem of *Sonār Tarī* rings a note which becomes dominant in the next book *Citrā* (The Wondrous She, 1896). The vague role of 'Desired She' as the Boatman is changed for the permanent one as the Queen Goddess of the poet's destiny or as *Vita Regina* who regulates the poet's thoughts and impulses and guides him in the course of the fulfilment of his destiny. This Mistress of Destiny is conceived in some poems as the Lord of Life accepting the homage of the poet's best efforts and in some others as the Guide of Destiny that pilots him through the tangled and zigzag course of life.

The sense of repose and the calm perception of the

beauties of nature and simplicity of happiness distinguish such poems as *Sukh* (Happiness), *Jyotsnā-rātre* (On a Moon-lit Night) and other poems in *Citrā*. But even a poet's life is not all peace and sweet repose. All around there is death and decay, distress and despair, poverty and disease, cruelty and injustice. The poet now realizes that a call has come to tread the path that runs through all that, and he must not be remiss. The call is from the Destiny of Man. So he says in *Ebār Phirāo More* (Turn Me Round Now):

> Who is He? I know not. I recognize Him not, but I know only this much that for Him, under the pall of the darkness of night, the pilgrimage of humanity is on the move from eternity to eternity, despite storm, stress and thunder, carefully guarding the tiny flame of the torch of the soul. I know only this: whoever hears unmistakably His song of call, he runs fearlessly into the vortex of danger, he discards his all, and bares his bosom before torture; the roar of death he hears as music. He is burnt alive in fire, he is impaled on the stake, he is hacked by the axe; all that is dear to him he makes fuel, and without hesitation, lights a sacrificial fire that burns as long as he lasts and all this for Him alone; tearing off his heart and making it an offering as if of a red lotus, he lays it with deep devotion and for the last time as the final oblation to Him; and so he makes his life complete in death.

In *Urvaśī*, one of his best known poems, Tagore handles a theme which is perhaps the only common theme appearing in the most important epochs in the history of Indian literature. The *Rigveda* has one of its best hymns on the divine damsel and her mortal lover. The same story occurs in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a later Vedic prose work, as well as in the popular epic *Mahābhārata*. Kālidāsa wrote a play on the topic. The Vedic poem reveals a passionate lover trying

to hold back the damsel who was leaving him as her passion had apparently cooled off. The Vedic prose story fills out the canvas but misses the fire of the old poem, and it presents the celestial girl as a courtesan, a decoy. The poet of *Mahābhārata* makes out an elaborate history of Urvaśī, from her genesis and up to the time of the Pāṇḍavas, and here she is no better than an oversexed, unattached woman. But Kālidāsa, on the other hand, makes a good love-story out of the Vedic legend, and in his play the lovers behave as normal man and woman. In Tagore's poem Urvaśī (literally 'the woman of boundless desire') is the symbol of primal desire which is the creative impulse in nature and in man, the impulse that makes man thirst for beauty and to create it. The aching desire of man for the perfect woman and the supreme beauty, which makes him vaguely restless, is clothed by Tagore in the merest outline of the epic story and worked into a poem that has the compact smoothness and chiselled finish of a Grecian marble.

The poem next to *Urvaśī, Svarga Haite Bidāy* (Farewell to Heaven), was written on the very next day (24 Agrahāyaṇ 1302). It is the other aspect of womanhood, symbolic of love and goodness. It is a hymn to woman who mothers the mortal life by submitting herself to patient drudgery and loving care. In contrast Urvaśī is a nymph who tempts but offers no lasting satisfaction or solace.

The last poem of *Citrā, Sindhu Pāre* (Beyond the Sea) is a magnificent blend of allegory, romance and mysticism. The quest of the soul ends when the Golden Boat reaches the other end of the sea, and the mysterious guide, the Desired She, reveals herself as his elusive love and welcomes him.

The poems of *Caitālī* (The Crop of the Year's End, 1896) were written in course of four months immediately after the publication of *Citrā*. They breathe the peace of joyous release of the poet's soul from the strain of the quest, receiving solace from contemplation of Nature, the poet's

first and last love. Tagore felt as the poet of the Upanishads had felt some three thousand years ago when he sang:

> Blessed I am as I see the light of heaven.
> Blessed I am that I am in love with the world.

Tagore's feeling was not the mystic experience of the Vedic poet that saw everything in the scale of eternity. Tagore's joyousness is derived from the impermanence of the phenomenal world, from a chance contemplation of the momentary patterns of life and nature.

Tagore's poetic diction always alternated periodically between the ornate and the simple. The hard texture of *Mānasī* is absent in *Sonār Tarī,* and the criss-cross pattern of *Citrā* has dissolved into the simple and bold lines of *Caitālī.* (In later books also this alternation is sustained—from *Kalpanā* to *Kṣaṇikā* and from *Naivedya* to *Kheyā.*) In the sonnets of *Caitālī* we notice that the poet was feeling the stress of the responsibility of the management of the joint family estate, was receiving recompense from Nature, dumb and vocal, and was seeking relief in the ideal of austere simplicity of ancient India.

Kālidāsa's poetry had now a fresh appeal for him. But the life around him was far from neglected. Deeper was his appreciation of the unique value of the humblest being his eyes encountered. On the eve of his departure from Sajadpur—which the poet did not then know would be for the last time as the master of the local tenancy—his romantic fancy is set on the future career of a small west country servant girl busy with her menial duties, whom he often noticed from the porthole of his boat. So he writes in the poem *Ananta Pathe* (On the Unending Path):

> Seated by the window I see her every day, a small girl, not in play, not vivacious, quiet and dutiful. With untarrying steps she plies her daily duties. With my heart heavy with tears I look at her and smile in affec-

> tion and sympathy. Today my boat would be weighing anchor and I shall go away. The girl too would go some day when her term of service is over, to her own land. She does not know me, nor do I know her. But I would like to see where she, following the thread of her life, would come to the end. In an unknown village in some far off land she would come as a bride to an unknown home, and then she would become a mother, and then all would be over. Beyond that, alas, who knows where the path of that girl leads to.

A didactic note appears in some poems in *Caitālī*, especially in two small epigrammatic poems. A book of such poems, *Kaṇikā* (Split Grains), came out in November 1899. In his later days Tagore had to write hundreds of such small poems and couplets to meet the heavy demand for his autograph writing. A small collection of such autograph couplets in Bengali and English was block-printed in Budapest in the poet's autograph and published under the name *Lekhan* (Scribblings, 1926). These couplets contain brilliant imagery couched in terse and sparkling expression and have the rare beauty of Chinese miniature printing. To quote examples from Tagore's original English:

> The departing night's one kiss on the closed eyes of morning glows in the star of dawn.
> The freedom of the wind and the bondage of the stem join hands in the dance of swaying branches.

The poet now picked up from old literature and history some noble incidents of self-sacrifice and other heroic episodes and embodied them in narrative verse. This mood synchronized with the new nationalistic movement that primarily advocated self-sacrifice in the cause of independence. *Kathā* (1900) is a collection of such tales admirably told. *Kāhinī* (1900) contains stories told more elaborately and dramatically. These two books of poems became very

popular as they were fully intelligible to the general reader and their contents were universally enjoyable. (Tagore's poetry was always so much in advance that it required years for the appearance of fully comprehending readers.) *Gāndhārīr Āvedan* (Gāndhārī's Appeal) and *Karṇa-Kuntī Saṃvād* (Dialogue between Karṇa and Kuntī) present three important personalities of the *Mahābhārata* in a new and more graceful light. Through such poems as *Śreṣṭha Bhikṣā* (Highest Sacrifice), *Pujāriṇī* (The Worshipper) and *Abhisār* (Tryst) Tagore drew attention to the greatness and the dramatic value of the anecdotes from Buddhistic literature. He also brought to the limelight of popular regard incidents from Maratha and Sikh history. Such tales of Tagore as well as his patriotic songs which were presently to come in a spate went a long way in furthering the independence movement in the country.

Now came a swing back to the colourfulness of poetic fancy as we find in the poems of *Kalpanā* (Fancy, 1900). A staid and majestic beat of the rhythm pulsates in the typical poems of the book. In *Vaiśākh* the blazing noontime of a hot summer day in the barren and parched expanse of Santiniketan is imagined as a lean and hungry yogi practising austerity.

In the poems of *Kṣaṇikā* (The Momentary She, 1900) which immediately followed *Kalpanā,* Tagore's poetry reached a peak. There is an informal unity of form and content which was not seen in the other books of his poetry except perhaps *Caitālī*. This is mainly accounted for by the fact that its sixty and odd poems were written in the course of a couple of months (May-June, 1900). The diction is wonderfully simple, the metre extraordinarily light and the mood flippantly provocative. But a veiled seriousness and emotional realism have given the poems of *Kṣaṇikā* a tone and depth that is beyond the reach of serious and traditional poetry. Shorn of all its trappings and the folds of coverings the heart of the poet is laid open in these poems, throbbing

in *joie de vivre*. The underlying meaning of the poems of *Kṣaṇikā* is the fundamental motive of lyric poetry. It is the capturing of the fleeting moment in its elusive trail of joy and sorrow, to transform its experience into impersonal memorability. The keynote of *Kṣaṇikā* is struck unequivocally in the poem *Śeṣ* (Finality). Life is flowing away in the stream of time, and to make the best of it is to run downstream; to prolong the moment, be it of joy or of sorrow, is to lose much fun, and to run against time is foolishness.

> To comprehend a thing thoroughly from beginning to end, to know everything around us, there is but a moment to spare. The world is a threadbare illusion —before one has time to realize it the night, life, gathers up all its dreams and departs. We are on a holiday only for a couple of days, but enough for love. Had life been for work it would have been a long life. We shall not stay on here, my dear; none of us will stay on for long and nothing shall remain as it is. With this happy knowledge let us push forward following the trail of Time.

The love poems have the colourfulness and the lightness of butterflies' wings and the inconsequence of moments of life of uninhibited movement. The poet is a lighthearted wayfarer with no destination to hurry forward to, no difficulty to negotiate.

> On the bosom of the lake flash the sparkles of diamonds and emeralds. In the mustard fields bees hum in intoxication. This path passes by so many villages, winding under the shade of so many trees, touching the fringes of so many fields and so many woods. I stop here for no reason.

But there is a deep purposefulness behind the aimless wanderings of the wayfarer. He is in love with life and he

is at considerable pains to keep it hidden from the rude eyes of the outside world.

> I tell nobody that on mornings and evenings, out on thy way and hugging the flute close to my heart, I come with no purpose and walk about in disguise. I sing the song that comes to me on the spot, adding so many tunes and making it melodious; but one song I keep for myself. At all other faces I raise my eyes and look—but I look up at thee only in dreams.

From the contemplation of *Kṣaṇikā* the poet comes out, in *Naivedya* (Offerings, 1901), to the surging battle-field of life, and feels the majestic presence of the Passive Force that controls the life of man and the destiny of the universe. In the close-knit and sculptured sonnets of *Naivedya* one can feel the heart-beats of the poet impelled to momentous activity. It was perhaps the destiny of the country that was knocking at the poet's heart to wake it up to strenuous and magnificent effort. The shameful backwardness of the country, its placid stupidity and profound unreason were gnawing at his heart; his condemnation was scathing and his call stirring:

> This death must be crossed over—this mesh of fear, this rubbish of inert mass heaped mountain high, dead junk. Oh! wake up you must on this glorious morning, in this stirring world, in this world of action.

Men have no living faith, only conventionality or superstition, but following the western way is mere snobbery. The Boer War revealed to the poet the rottenness of the modern European world:

> Civilization, the cruel dragon, has in a split moment, lifted up her dreadful hood and charged her hidden fangs with deadly venon.
> Under the guise of patriotism a stupendous wrong would sweep away right by the flood of might.

The poet envisages a glorious image of India as a nation about to rise from the stupor of ignorance and inactivity.

In December, 1901 Tagore started his 'Brahmacarya' school at Santiniketan, which in a way was an expression of the urge vocal in *Naivedya,* and which was also a vicarious consolation for his not having a proper schooling in his boyhood.

His wife died in November, 1902. In her memory he wrote the poems collected under the name *Smaraṇ* (Remembrance, 1903). A deep sense of understanding runs through these poems of tender pathos and grateful remembrance. The personal loss appears as an emotional gain.

> That we two could exchange our last words, such a chance did not come to you. Bearing the sorrow of that speechless adieu I have searched everywhere in vain expectation. Today underneath all the thoughts of this heart your speech and mine mingle together.

The poet felt deeply the mute sorrow of his two younger children who had just lost their mother and the reaction of this emotion was the opening of a new spring of poetic inspiration. The poems of *Śiśu* (The Child, 1903) reveal an unfathomed depth in perhaps the most primitive and undoubtedly the most fundamental emotion of humanity—love for the child. The elusive gracefulness of the child, its unpredictable behaviour and delightful capriciousness, its illogical fancies and the intangible pathos of its frustrations—in all this the poet feels the pulsation of the creative life of the universe. In Vaishnav lyrics the love and admiration for the child had some sort of poetic recognition. But the child there is not the ordinary child but God incarnate as the child of man. In Tagore's poetry there is no apotheosis but universalization of the child of man as the spirit of the life eternally emergent.

Many of the poems in *Śiśu* are suitable for children's

reading. (As a matter of fact the bulk of them were written for his motherless son and daughter. A few were written in his early youth and included in the earlier editions of *Kaḍi O Komal,* for the entertainment of his nephew and niece, the children of Satyendranath Tagore.) But all the poems of *Śiśu* have a deep significance for the older reader and they offer a sumptuous feast for both the fancy of the young and contemplation of the old.

In 1903-04 Mohitchandra Sen, a professor of philosophy in Calcutta and a lover of Tagore's poetry, edited a collection of Tagore's poems (and plays) rearranged into sections according to the content and labelled under a heading which did not always follow the titles of the original books. The poet wrote for each section a new prefatory poem where he attempted to indicate the significance of the nomenclature of the section. These introductory poems were later collected in a separate book and published under the title *Utsarga* (Dedication, 1914). In these poems there is the first conscious attempt of the poet to formulate his own view of life, that is, the 'religion' of his own self. He perceives in his own personality a continuous duet of the ego and the super-ego.

> The perfume that trembles in the bosom of the flower, the song that hangs in the light of the dawn, the elusive glow that flits over the cornfield in autumn, bright in the sun-bath, from the gold to the green—the same perfume has built my body, the same song is creating new illusions in me and the same glow is casting a shade in my eyes. Who can hold me in myself?

The ego and the super-ego are co-eternal. Through the former the latter is moving towards finality: from birth to death and from death to birth. (It is a mistake to conclude that by this finality Tagore meant anything like spiritual perfection or emancipation or *nirvāṇa.* It is a movement

that impels the universe—life included—to endless expansion.)

> O my eternal friend, for all the time you are building me up anew. You have always been with me and shall be for all time to come.

This idea is clarified in a letter written by Tagore to the editor of the collected poems:

> I too perceive the person whom you look upon as Rabindra. He is an object of nature like the buds and twigs of trees and plants. If it blossoms out well and good, if it withers away no harm is done. This is always happening around us. But I exist far beyond him. I exist in time and space unlimited. What joy and sorrow, what history, what life and death can hold me up?

In the poems of *Kheyā* (The Ferry, 1906) the poet's thought and yearnings are leaning towards the mysticism of Vaishnav poetry, and lyricism is approaching musicality. 'The Ferry' takes the reader easily over to the landing ground of the temple of the 'Song Offering'.

The songs of the mystic Vaishnavs of Bengal commonly known as 'Bāul' (literally, 'a mad fellow') who used to draw their votaries from Hindus and Muslims impartially, had always a great attraction for Tagore. The following fragment of a Bāul song heard by the wayside at Santiniketan when the poet was a young man had acted as a mystic mantra to him, and it gave him an inspiration that never ceased to operate:

> In and out of the cage the unknown bird comes and goes unbeknown ; if I could have but caught it I would have put my heart as a chain round its feet.

When Tagore was passing most of his days in north central Bengal as the agent of the family estate he had the

opportunity of meeting some of the most prominent Bāuls of the day including Lālan Fakir of Kustea. But the strongest impression left on Tagore by any individual of this class was of a Vaishnav woman who would often come to him of a morning at Silaidah, sit at his feet for some time and depart accepting as alms nothing but the withered flowers cast off from the vase on the poet's desk. The uncommon personality of this Vaishnav woman has been immortalized in one of his short stories. References to her occur elsewhere too.

Tagore now came to know of the poetry of the north-western mystic saints like Kabir, Mīrā, Dādu, Geyāndās, and others. Appreciation of the mystic songs of Bengal Bāuls and non-Bengali saints gave a new impetus to Tagore's poetry which had already taken an inward turn with a bias for the Vaishnav approach. I do not mean that Tagore was influenced by Vaishnavism. I only mean that as Vaishnav poetry is based on a fundamentally Indian and peculiarly Bengali outlook on life and as it had developed a symbolism, it was readily acceptable to Tagore. The quest of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa whose flute was calling her to him from an unknown distance had as much significance for Tagore as Kālidāsa's Yakṣa who was sending the cloud messenger to his beloved dwelling in the far off Alakā. The former was symbolic of the poet's spiritual quest and the latter of his emotional quest.

The so-called *Gītāñjali* period (1905-11) comprises some of the most harassed years in the life of Tagore. In poetry and prose, in novel and drama, in quiet thought and in profound activity Tagore's efforts now blossomed forth in a way that was unexpected even for him. Personally it was a period of great mental stress and storm for him. His second daughter died (1903), soon after the death of his wife (1902), and his youngest son followed (1907). His school at Santiniketan was costing him dearly. The Swadeshi movement of Bengal drew him out of his nook and he was doing

his utmost to canalise the nationalistic enthusiasm into a constructive course planned by him in his several essays and addresses and partly initiated in his own estate in north central Bengal. But in the midst of the various activities he maintained his detachment. He was conscious of a persistent call from within for coming out of his poet's shell. He came out on the political field of his country with his programme of construction. But the country was not ready for him, and, disappointed, the poet crawled back to his shell, but not to remain so for long. He soon came out on the much larger field of humanity, not with a programme or prescription but himself following a call, and he felt sure that it would take him nearer to the heart of humanity.

Gītāñjali (Song Offering, 1910), *Gītīmālya* (Song Garland, 1914) and *Gītāli* (Songs, 1914) are the books of poems of this period. Between the publication of *Gītāñjali* and *Gītimālya* the poet visited England and America, met Yeats and others and won the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913). The award of the Nobel Prize was of tremendous significance for India, being the first recognition of contemporary India as an equal partner in the assembly of the men of letters of the free and progressive world.

There is this common feature in the three books: they are mostly as much poems as songs and their import is distinctly mystic and devotional. As we progress from *Gītāñjali* we notice that the poems assume more and more the form of song. It is true that Tagore's poetry does not show any rigid line of demarcation between a lyric poem and a song and that his wonderful musical gifts had successfully set some of his elaborate and difficult poems to music; a distinction nevertheless can be made between a song (i.e. a poetic composition written as such and immediately set in tune) and a poem (i.e. a poetic composition written without any such end). In the songs his emotions and yearnings are vocal and persistent. In the poems his emotional urge is subdued and passive. The diction of the songs is very much

simpler, their metre much lighter and their poetry more exquisite, if possible.

From this time onward Tagore's poetry followed the parallel paths of lyric poetry and of song. The two paths for a time were divergent. The lyric form at first became almost architecturally sombre and majestic but was presently following the simple diction of the song. The songs are generally very short compositions.

Balākā (A Chain of Flying Birds, 1916) introduced new technique in the form of Tagore's poetry. The metre, based on Payār, shows unequal lines and uneven pause, which is consonent with the pitches of emotion and with the variation of mood. The wonderful filigree of metaphors, the portentous sonority of the words and the massive rythm of the lines invest the characteristic poems of *Balākā* with the solemn majesty of ancient architecture. The poetry of *Balākā* is truly grand, in the grandest scale possible for the lyric. We had seen nothing like it before, not even the gorgeous *Urvaśī*.

Balākā reminds us vaguely of *Kṣaṇikā* despite the striking contrast between the two books. Here also the poet is in the mood of the wayfarer but he is not solitary now; the whole universe appears to be on the move. In *Kṣaṇikā* there is no destination, as for a truant child the path leads to nowhere in particular, or rather it leads him to anywhere. In *Balākā* the path is the road to universal destiny, call it evolution or by any other name, and man is immortal in his mortality. There is throughout a strong note of retrospection. The poet feels that the time for leaving this world is drawing nearer, and so for the first time feels a sort of nostalgia. In the World War I which was then on, the poet sees the purgatorial punishment of the Western Powers for their greed and suppression of humanity.

> O my ruthless God! They are greedy, they are muddle-headed, they pass over Thy lion-gate; surreptitiously and

> without authority they dig in and steal Thy treasure. The stolen treasure, a heavy burden, every split moment squeezes out their vitals, and there is no way of laying it down. I shed tears and ask Thee repeatedly: Pardon them, O my ruthless God! I look and see that Thy pardon sweeps down in a terrific storm; buffetted by that storm they fall in the dust; the huge pile of their loot tumbles down pell mell and is scattered away in the gale. O my ruthless God! Thy pardon is in the fumes of the rumbling thunder; it is in the doomsday book of sundown; it is in the shower of blood; it is in the crashes of unexpected impacts.

In a poem written ten months later Tagore records his admiration for the fighting spirit and selfless spirit and patriotism shown in the battlefields of France and fervently hopes for a regeneration of Europe:

> These torrents of heroes' blood, these streams of mothers' tears: would their entire worth be lost in the dust of the earth? Wouldn't Heaven be bought over by them? Wouldn't the Master of the treasurehold of the universe pay up this vast balance of credit? Wouldn't the penance of the night usher in the bright day? On a dreadful night of sorrow, with the blow of Death when man has levelled down its own mortal barrier, wouldn't the immortal greatness of God appear?

Tagore was too much of an artist to stick to a particular form for long. The irregular metre of *Balākā* he now employed in writing the poems of *Palātakā* (The Truant She, 1918) which brought in a new *genre* of lyric poetry. These poems having a sort of story kernel each, ring of the deep pathos of the frustrations of small hopes and little cravings of the common man.

The poems of *Śiśu Bholānāth* (Child the Forgetful Lord, 1922) are allied to the poems of *Śiśu*, but they are on a

different plane and reveal the child in the poet more than anything else. The poet looks at the world longingly through the wistful eyes of a child not free to move as he likes.

The typical poems of the next book of verse *Pūrabī* (The Eastern Melody, 1925), were written in South America and on the sea (September 1924 to January 1925). In the poem *Mukti* (Emancipation) the poet expresses his own joys and hopes.

In the poems of *Mahuyā* (1829) the poet paid his homage to women, and specially remarkable are the poems under the caption *Nāmnī* (The Named), which delineate the various facets of women's sweetness and charm appearing in the different types of girlhood. The characteristic poems of *Vanavāṇī* (The Voice of the Woodland, 1931) carry the poet's tributes to plants big and small, known and unknown which, as typifying life irrepressible and triumphant, had always been a source of joy and inspiration to him.

Retrospection and reminiscence are the dominant mood in the poems of *Pariśeṣ* (Finis, 1932). The style shows a keenness and a freshness that spells something more than the vigour of *Balākā* and the simplicity of *Kṣaṇikā*. Tagore's art of expression found a new harmony here. There is also an important metrical novelty. The last fourteen poems are written in uneven unrhymed verse, the precursor of the real free verse which appears in his next books.

The mood is not pessimistic, neither is it joyous; it is a mood of quietude and happiness. In the poem *Dināvasān* (The End of the Day) the poet speaks of the day when he shall be here no more but the life in him will have spread over around to continue for ever and his happiness will persist in all that is good and sweet and simple in nature and in man. He would hate to know that huge meetings would be called and pretentious monuments raised in his memory:

Let my memory be associated for ever where my songs

> mingle yonder with the murmur of the frills of the fir leaves, where under the Śephālikā the dew's smile for the moment sparkles, where the shade tumbles down in slumber festooned by specks of sunlight, where my hours of work idle in the guise of work, where my neglect of work lights up a hidden lamp and with multi-coloured dreams fills up the basket of beauty.

The poems of *Punaśca* (Postscript, 1932), *Śeṣ Saptak* (The Last Octave, 1935), *Patrapuṭ* (The Cup of Leaves, 1936) and *Śyāmalī* (The Dark She, 1936) have a free rhythm which leans more towards prose than the English free verse or the French *vers libre*. These 'prose poems' are characterized not only by the prose rhythm but by the prose diction as well. The subject-matter of these poems demands such a metre and such a diction, otherwise their rugged uneven and non-emotional thought-contents would not have been properly presented. This was no new experiment for Tagore. He had written such poems (not then called as such) long ago, but the poet was then chary to give them the outward shape of poetry. So they were included in *Lipikā* (Slips of Writing, 1922) as story crumbs in poetical prose.

The subject-matter of the poems of *Vicitritā* (The Variegated She, 1933) are the paintings by some of the artists of Santiniketan and by the poet and his friends. Here the poems illustrate the pictures rather than the pictures illustrate the poems.

The keynote of *Bīthikā* (The Arbor Path, 1935) is struck by its first poem *Atīter Chāyā* (The Shade of the Past). The heart of the poet is quietly waiting for the approach of the great unknown the Eternal Past that 'in his necklace has set in one after another as gems the old centuries, their heartache and their anguish all quietened.'

Khāp-chāḍā (The Bizarre, 1937) contains short verses in the nursery rhyme variety meant primarily for children but equally enjoyable by the old. The exquisite lightness and

brilliant flexibility of the metre and the unbridled sweep of fancy have imparted a peculiarly delightful relish to these New Nursery Rhymes.

The poems of *Chaḍār Chabi* (Rhymed Pictures, 1937) on the other hand, are longer in size and heavier in content. The poet apparently wrote them for the young but he did not mean that they would all be readily comprehensible to the immature reader. In many of these poems the reminiscences of the poet's boyhood and youth have been echoed. Two poems are very remarkable. In *Pisni* (Auntie) the deep and mute pathos of the very old whose family ties have long been scattered and who lives in the no-man's land between the fast failing memory and the final dissolution:

> There was a time when by neighbours' courtesy she was a cousin to some one's mother; she was granny to Motilāl and auntie to Cunilāl. As she remembers this her memory suddenly snaps and she cannot fish out from it another name. She draws a deep sigh, and thinks dully: how many days more are yet to pass.

The poet's deep attachment for the commonest manifestations of nature and life around him has found nostalgic expression in the poem *Pichu Ḍākā* (A Call from Behind).

The short poems of *Prāntik* (The Frontierer, 1938), all written in the elongated Payār verse, describe the twilight feelings of semi-consciousness mixed with the melancholy fancy of the sickbed, when the poet had just recovered from a very serious illness. The poems were written between September and December 1937. The very short final poem gives Tagore's reactions to the Sino-Japanese War which was to be a prolegomenon to the World War II.

> The she-serpents all around are hissing out their poisonous breath, and now the mellifluous sermon of peace would sound like a bad jest. So before taking leave I make the call to those who, for fighting with the

demon, are making themselves ready in their own homes.

The next book of verse Señjuti (The Evening Lamp. 1938) shows the return of the poet's outlook to its normal equilibrium. The poems of *Prahāsinī* (The Frolicsome She, 1839) are written in a light and jocose vein. The joys and miseries of the past that had long been left behind now cast their shadow in the poems of *Ākāś Pradīp* (The Sky Lamp, 1939). The poem *Samay-hārā* (The Timeless Fellow) is Tagore's mild but effective reply to the group of young writers of verse from East Bengal who blamed Tagore standing against the acceptance of their own poetry and who would like to convince the reader that the poetry of Tagore was time-barred and out of vogue. The poem is an exquisite specimen of pastiche where some lines from well-known nursery rhymes woven with a few lines from an equally well-known mediaeval poet have been worked into a delightful pattern with mild irony.

In the significant poems of *Navajātak* (The New-born, 1940) the poet has called in question the worth of the mechanized civilization of the West. In the poem *Prāyaścitta* (Expatiation) he prognosticates the course of World War II that was just about to break out. The inhumanities of war are expressed poignantly in the poem *Apaghāt* (Accident) in the book *Sānāi* (The Flute Concert, 1940):

> Down the path of the sunset the afternoon rays slant; the wind is tired and has stopped; a cart loaded with straw crawls over the lonesome field to the distant market place at Nadia; tied behind it a calf is led by a rope. In the outskirts of the Rājbanshi quarter of the village, on the edge of the pond, the eldest boy of Banamāli the school-master is sitting still, holding the butt of the fishing red.
>
> A press telegram comes at the same moment: Finland has been shattered by bombing by the Soviet.

The poems of *Rogaśayyāy* (In Sickbed, 1940) remind us

of *Prāntik* but here all through there is an undercurrent of listlessness without a trace of despondency:

> Whatever I want with hungry eagerness my grasping arms fall off and a consciousness lights up, and I find it identical with the morning sunlight: it is void but it is not nihil. Then I understand the saying of the sages: Had not space been overflowing with *ānanda* the body and the spirit would have lain clapped in the vice of the unmoving matter ; who indeed could have breathed in or out if this *ānanda* had not been pervading in the encircling space.

In the poems of *Ārogya* (Convalescence, 1941) the mood is lighter. The poet is thankful for the affectionate care with which nature and man are nursing him in these days of his second childhood. The sound of a distant gong draws out from the forgotten memory the inconsequential and insignificant sights and sounds reviving the pathos of the impending separation from the beloved earth.

But the separation from his beloved the earth would not be absolute. Life will be going on in the dust of the earth.

Janmadine (On the Birthday, 1941) is the last book of verse published during the poet's lifetime. In its characteristic poems Tagore has attempted a modest estimation of his life and attainment. A sense of deep gratitude and thankfulness runs through them. *Janmadine* is a fitting fade-out of the 'Evening Song' started more than sixty years before.

In the songs of Tagore lyric poetry has received an elusive subtlety and an exquisite refinement that have extented its domain beyond the bounds of the mere rhythmic speech. As a creator of beauty Tagore is unique in many fields of literary and artistic forms, and he is without a second in his creation of musical forms, tunes and melodies. Some of his

tunes are improvements on the metre, being lightened and quickened by the addition of the musical beat. Sometimes it appears as though the metre of Tagore's poetry is not amenable to the usual metrical scheme but then it follows a musical pattern or tune. Some poems and songs, again, can be scanned both ways, metrically and musically, and in such a case the musical scansion invariably gives an added flavour. Occasionally some slight verbal alteration is made when a poem is put to music as a song. The tunes and melodies created by Tagore have an unspeakable charm which comes not so much from the blending of folk styles with the high or academic style of music, with dashes from European music, but from such a moulding of the music pattern that the tune follows a rhythm of its own, a rhythm that combines in itself the metrical, musical and dance beats. This is why Tagore's music sometimes sounds like rhythmic chanting.

One of the greatest achievements, in his closing years, was that Tagore succeeded in rendering a song independent of lyricism and other conventional poetic devices, and he made excellent songs of some of his terse and solid poems like *Urvaśī* and *Chabi.*

TAGORE's first play was written in 1881 soon after his return from England. It is a musical play on the story of the robber Vālmīki becoming the first poet and is entitled *Vālmīki-pratibhā* (Genius of Vālmīki, 1881). It was staged at home (March, 1881) on the occasion of the annual reunion of the old Hindu and Presidency collegians. Tagore took the role of Vālmīki ; the other roles were taken by his young nephews and nieces. *Vālmīki-pratibhā* presents a new form of Bengali opera where the songs do not echo the talks but the songs and the talks (also sung) are complementary. The performance was a signal success. Among the audience were Bankim Chandra Chatterji and other eminent literary men and intellectuals of Calcutta.

The next play *Kāl-mṛgayā* (The Fatal Hunt, 1882) is of the same type as *Vālmīki-pratibhā*. The story, also from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is Daśaratha's misadventure in accidentally killing the son of the sage Sindhu. This play also was performed successfully at the next annual reunion of the old collegians.

Tagore's third play, *Prakṛtir Pariśodh* (The Repayment of Nature, 1884) was written at Karwar but some songs were added later. The theme presents for the first time Tagore's own view of life. It is the adjustment of conflicting love and duty by achieving a mellowness of the heart; escapism of the ascetic offers no enduring solution, and the real success in life comes when the life of man is attuned to the spirit of Nature. *Prakṛtir Pariśodh* is lyrical rather than dramatic, and it has never been performed on the stage.

The story of the next play, *Nalinī* (1884), was taken from the author's own narrative poem *Bhagnahṛday* (Broken Heart, 1881).

Rājā O Rānī (The King and Queen, 1889) is a tragic drama in five acts. It was written at Solapur and is mainly in verse. The germ of the theme is to be found in the poem *Niṣphal Kāmanā* (The Fruitless Desire) in *Mānasī*. King Vikramdev is deeply in love with his wife Sumitrā and finds no time for his royal duties. Sumitrā does not like it, being sure that it was bound to be followed by a reaction that would destroy that love. She also knows that it is never a true love that interferes with one's duties in life. The queen therefore could not encourage her husband to wallow in her love and thereby neglect the administration of his kingdom. But the passion of the king could not be curbed, and the conflict between love and duty ended in tragedy. There is a second story, the love of Kumārsen and Ilā, which does not absolutely fit in with the main story, and the sensational finale of the second story is rather jarring.

In spite of its shortcomings *Rājā O Rānī* is one of the best tragic dramas that had yet been written in the

language. It was performed repeatedly and with great success on the public stage and it established Tagore's reputation as a playwright. Tagore's name was already familiar to the stage-going people. His novel *Bauṭhākurānīr Hāṭ* (1883) was rendered into a stage play by Kedarnath Chaudhuri, and some songs by Tagore were put in it. This play (*Basanta-Rāy*) was quite popular on the stage. In 1909 Tagore wrote a five act drama, *Prāyaścitta* (Expiation), based on his novel of the same name. Much later (1929) a revised version of this play was published under the title *Paritrāṇ* (Relief).

Forty years later Tagore rewrote *Rājā O Rānī* excluding the second story, smoothing out the other incongruities and adding two new characters and published it under the title *Tapatī* (1929). It is entirely in prose. *Tapatī* is almost entirely a new play.

Visarjan (The Immersion, 1890) is a lyrical tragedy and is one of the best plays of Tagore. In performance too its superiority is undoubted. The story is taken from his juvenile novel *Rājarṣi* (The Royal Sage, 1889) the theme of which is taken from the history of Tipperah in the seventeenth century. The dramatic interest here is in the clash of deep emotion, superior wisdom and unattached wide view of life against blind orthodoxy, narrow conception of duty and mistaken rights of jurisdiction. Characterization is superb.

Citrāṅgadā (1892),[2] *Bidāy-abhiśāp* (The Parting Curse, 1894) and *Mālinī* (1895) are dramatic lyrics of varying length. The mere hint of the story of *Mālinī* is taken from the Buddhist text *Mahāvastu,* but the development is Tagore's own and the finale is based on a dream he had in London during his second visit to Europe (1890).

Between 1885 and 1897 Tagore wrote several comic playlets and sketches and two farces: *Goḍay Galad* (A Wrong

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[2] The English version *Citra* was successfully staged in London.

Start. 1892) and *Baikunther Khātā* (Baikuṇṭha's Manuscript Copy, 1897). *Goḍāy Galad* was later rewritten and published under the title *Śeṣ-rakṣā* (Saved At Last, 1928). The wit and humour presented in these plays, playlets and sketches are intensely enjoyable and they are as fresh now as ever. *Goḍay Galad* was first performed at Sangit Samaj under the direction of the author. It was an important event in the history of the Indian stage and histrionics.

Cirakumār-sabhā (The Society of Confirmed Bachelors, 1901) presents a peculiar form of the humorous play. Here the story is entirely carried through dialogues and it reads almost like a novel. Years later (1925) it was given also the proper form of the drama. The first version was published in book form under the title *Prajāpatir Nirbandha* (Obduracy of the Marriage Deity). A smaller work but closely similar in form to *Cirakumār-sabhā* is *Karmaphal* (Fruit of Karma, 1903). It was later given the accepted form of a farce under the title *Śodhbodh* (All Quits, 1926). Both *Cirakumār-sabhā* and *Śodhbodh* are stage successes.

Tagore began to write musical plays with a mystic or spiritual import some time after he had come to stay permanently at Santiniketan. In the earliest of such plays, *Śāradotsav* (The Autumn Festival, 1908), in *Phālgunī* (The Spirit of the Spring Month, 1915) and in *Vasanta* (The Spring, 1923) the spirit of the season symbolizes the different aspects of nature to which the progressive human soul is attuned, and *tyāga* (renunciation) is the secret of permanent blessedness (*ānanda*). The cue of the slender story of *Phālgunī* was taken from the Buddhistic story of Makhādeva (as in *Mahāvastu*) and the spirit of the play is somewhat akin to the significant poems of *Balākā*. Its performance at Calcutta (March 1915) by the poet, his relatives and the Santiniketan troupe of teachers and students, is the most remarkable event in the history of Bengali stage and stage decor in the current century. The poet appeared in the double role of Young Kaviśekhar and Old Bāul.

Rājā (The King, 1910)[3] is the first really symbolic drama by Tagore. The story in its outline is taken from the Buddhistic story of the king Kuśa (as in *Mahāvastu*). A short stage version of *Rājā* was published under the title *Arūp-ratan* (The Formless Precious One, 1920). The symbolism is briefly indicated in the preface.

Both *Rājā* and *Acalāyatan* (The Immobile Institution, 1911) were written within a period of eight months when the poet was staying once again in north central Bengal. The story of *Acalāyatan* is entirely original, but its spirit and the whole atmosphere is amazingly life-like and historical. During the closing centuries of the first millennium of the Christian era and the opening centuries of the next there was a peculiar development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Eastern India, the so-called Vajrayāna and Mantrayāna practices. Several Buddhistic monasteries (*Vihāra*) grew up where religion, philosophy and higher learning were cultivated with devotional zeal. But over all there was an almost fanatical belief in supernatural powers obtainable from esoteric practices and extreme penances which were believed to be the only goal of intellectual and spiritual advance. This belief became universal and led to social and intellectual inanition and to spiritual mockery, and as history tells us, it ultimately pushed the whole country on the downward path of inactivity and helplessness resulting in the loss of independence for centuries. In *Acalāyatan* Tagore gives an imaginary but none the less real picture of such social, intellectual and spiritual stagnation, and he indicates also the means of escape from it. The play demonstrates that Tagore was not only very well-read in Buddhism but that he had a true perspective of history. *Acalāyatan* is a powerful drama, a delightful play and at the same time a glowing history of the decline and fall of Tantric Buddhism, of the conflict of the Aryan and the non-Aryan culture and the final fusion of the two.

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[3] The English version is entitled *The King of the Dark Chamber*.

Guru (1918) is an abridged version of *Acalāyatan* suitable for staging by school boys of Santiniketan.

Ḍākghar (Post Office, 1912) is the best known of the symbolic plays by Tagore. Judged as a play *Ḍākghar* is not so much dramatic as narrative and there is not much of a story to tell. The poet called it a 'prose lyric' in dramatic form. But the play is vital and moving, and, though difficult, its performance at Santiniketan (and elsewhere) was signally successful.

Ḍākghar symbolizes the spiritual quest of the individual soul while the next symbolic play *Muktadhārā* (The Released Stream, 1922) symbolizes the triumph of the goodness of man over the oppressiveness of power and greed going by the name of nationalism and efficiency. In a way *Muktadhārā* foretells the disaster of the second World War that was to come in less than a score of years. When it was written the Non-co-operation movement in India was in full swing. There is some reflection of it in the plot of the play.

The last and perhaps the most difficult of Tagore's symbolic plays is *Raktakarabī* (Red Oleanders, 1924). The characters, however, are all full-blooded and human. The symbolism here is fully articulated and boldly drawn up and the drama is powerful. The blinding greed of power and wealth that is relentlessly controlling the destiny of the civilized mankind of today and is forcing the masses to a life of indignity, ugliness, bestiality and soullessness is the theme of the play. The drama points out that the salvation of mankind is to be sought in a life where knowledge and power help in a simplicity of existence that is harmonious with nature, both animate and inanimate.

The next play of Tagore is *Gṛhapraveś* (House Warming, 1925). The plot is taken from the author's own short story *Śeṣer Rātri* (The Night of the End). It is a plain drama and there is no touch of symbolism. The play was very successful on the public stage.

Naṭīr Pūjā (A Dancing Girl's Worship, 1926) is a play

in which music and dance play an important part. The slender plot is based on a Buddhist legend on which the poet had written the poem *Pujāriṇī* (The Worshipping Woman). The play is one of Tagore's most popular dramas. It introduced a new technique in dance-cum-music. *Caṇḍālikā* (The Untouchable Girl, 1933) is a full-fledged music-and-dance playlet. The plot is based on a Buddhist legend (*Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*). It has some affinity with *Citrāṅgadā*. In the latter the heroine attempted to win the heart of her beloved by borrowed charms but was successful only when she had discarded her borrowed plumes and had nothing to offer but her love. In *Caṇḍalikā* the low-caste girl attempted to win the love of the monk Ānanda, to whom she had lost her heart, by means of occult power exercised by her mother on her behalf, but at the verge of triumph she came to her senses. She saw that she could possess Ānanda's body but not his heart. She asked her mother to stop the chant and took to the path of renunciation.

Tāser Deś (The Land of Playing Cards, 1933) is based on a short story of Tagore's own. It is a delightful play full of light-hearted song and dance. *Bāṃśarī* (1933) is a play that partakes of the structure of a love story in dialogue. There is not much action but that has not interfered with the dramatic interest. It has never been played on the stage.

The last dramatic writings of Tagore are the three dance-dramas (*Nṛtya-nāṭya*): *Citrāṅgadā* (1936), *Caṇḍālikā* (1938) and *Śyāmā* (1938). The plot of the last is based on Tagore's own poem *Pariśodh* (Quits). These dance-plays show the last stage of development in Tagore's lyrical drama. Here dance is a means of dramatic expression and not mere adjunct to or an embellishment of songs. In his *nṛtya-naṭyas* Tagore has created a new type of esthetic expression where poetry is blended with music, dance and drama and all are of equal importance.

TAGORE is the first writer of the true short story in Bengali

(1891) and he has remained the best. His short stories are concerned with ordinary men and women from the humbler walks of life. The number of Tagore's stories is about a hundred and their variety is manifold. How Tagore had received his first inspirations for writing short stories is told in a poem contemporaneous with his first short stories (and also in some letters):

> I feel the urge of writing stories, one by one and in my own way, on humble lives and their small miseries, on matters of small consequence, really simple and plain, a few drops of tears from the thousands of forgotten memories flowing down to oblivion.
> There would be no colourful narration, no piling up of incidents ; there would be no philosophizing and no moralizing. On coming to the end one would feel a sort of unsatisfaction as if the conclusion is not really the end. . . .
> All this that is neglected and rejected, this unpurposeful display of life, I would for a moment gather around me and with it I would create a rainfall of all that is forgotten, in a rainy night of the life.

In many of the short stories of Tagore there is an undercurrent of a faint tragic note. But it is not tragic in the accepted sense. It is a note of regret arising out of a sense of frustration and futility that wells up from a deeper understanding of life. In a song that was written at a time when Tagore was writing his first short stories, this sense of frustration in life in general is tersely and exquisitely expressed:

> It is only going and coming, merely floating down the stream ; it is nothing but only smiles and tears in alternate light and darkness. It is but a chance meeting, just a touch in passing ; it is only looking back with tearful eyes when going away. It is only running after a fresh mirage, leaving behind futile hopes.

> The desire is endless but the ability is mutilated. Utmost strivings bring only incomplete results. It is like floating in the sea in a wrecked boat. Thoughts groan within and the expression is inadequate.
> It is only half an understanding between hearts; it is really half a word that is never finished; it is only a speck of love amidst coyness, fear, terror and half-trust.

The short stories of Tagore present a variety of form and content, and they range from the terrain of love to the domain of the ghost. As a literary *genre* Tagore's short stories are perfect, and they can be compared favourably with the best in English, American, French and Russian literature. Like poetry and song short story was written to the very last of Tagore's days. A careful study of his short stories would reveal the continual progressiveness of Tagore's art.

THE first two novels of Tagore have their plots taken from the history of the seventeenth century Bengal. The cue of the plot of *Bauṭhākurānīr Hāṭ* (1883) was taken from Ghosh's *Vaṅgādhīp-parājay* (1869) but it is more of a domestic type than historical. *Rājarṣi* (1885) is a 'juvenile' novel and the plot is taken from the history of Tipperah. The conflict between the head and the heart is the main note of the theme of the two novels. The first shows faint traces of the influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterji but the second does not show any.

The next novel was written some fifteen years later. It is *Cokher Bāli* (Eye-sore, 1902). Here for the first time in Indian literature the actions and reactions arising out of the impact of the minds of individuals propel the plot and not so much the external happenings. The psychosis of the characters is followed realistically, and in this respect the novel is unique in our literature. The end of the story appears to some readers of the present day as not being in full accord with the realism of the plot, and Tagore himself

was not unaware of it. But it could not have been made otherwise. Any other end to Vinodini's career would have given, unwarrantedly, the rudest shock even to the most advanced reader of the day, and Tagore was no believer in shock tactics and had never attempted to be outrageously original. In the contemporaneous long story *Naṣṭanīḍ* (The Lost Nest, 1903), however, Tagore did what he could not do in *Cokher Bāli.*

Naukāḍubi (The Boat Wreck, 1905) was written almost immediately after *Cokher Bāli.* In the earlier novel the problems of individual life are entangled with the problems of domestic life. In the later novel the problem of individual life is entangled with problems of the social life. There are few incidents in *Cokher Bāli* but *Naukāḍubi* does not lack incidents and accidents. Both novels were first serialized in *Baṅgadarśan* (new series) which was then coming out under the editorship of Tagore.

In Tagore's greatest novel *Gorā* (1910) the problems of the individual, of the society and of the State are intertwined. In the comprehensiveness of the canvas of the plot as well as in the masterly execution, *Gorā* has been rightly viewed as something like a *Mahābhārata* of modern India. The social and political future of the country has been boldly indicated and there is a clear prediction of the Non-co-operation movement of Mahatma Gandhi which was to come a decade later. Tagore never uses the same technique in his novels, and the technique of *Gorā* is almost entirely different from that of its predecessors.

Caturaṅga (The Quartet or Chess, 1916), as the name implies, consists of four episodes or interconnected stories which first appeared as independent stories in the pages of *Sabujpatra* (1915). But the other sense of the title signifies the unity of the episodes as a novel as well as the fate of the heroine in the hands of four persons who came successively to control her fate. In technique and execution *Caturaṅga* is faultless, and in a sense it is the most compact and neatest

work of fiction in the language. Here the problem is not of the outside; it is the difficulty that a person finds when he or she is faced with emotional crises and seeks mental or spiritual equilibrium.

Ghare Bāire (At Home and Outside, 1916) followed *Caturaṅga* immediately in the pages of *Sabujpatra,* and it introduced a new style in prose and a new form in fiction. The time is the first decade of the century when the intellectual Bengal was in the thick of the Swadeshi movement. Sensible men were then concerned deeply with the progressive movement in several fields: economic independence of the country, education of women, avoidance of the traditional grooves of moral and religious thought, and freedom from the bondage of social and domestic tyranny. The new ideas about sex from the West (including Sex Psychology) had just arrived. The hero Nikhileś loves his country, likes his people and adores his wife. And this love and adoration he would like to be made free from obligation to or force from any quarter. He is a supporter of Swadeshi but is against indiscriminately boycotting everything foreign and he opposes violence in any form. He would give his wife freedom from conjugal bondage so that she might assess the real nature and true value of their love grown out of wedlock and then love him freely if she still liked. Nikhileś hated to think that his wife was obliged to make love to him as her inviolable duty. In this novel Tagore has shown the contrast between the old ways and the new at home and outside. The narration is in the form of personal notes and diaries of the three main characters that form the triangle of contest.

Jogāyog (Links and Gaps, 1930) is a purely domestic story. The conflict is between the ideologies and sensibilities of a family mellowed with culture for generations but now lacking cash, and the coarseness and animal greed of a very ordinary person who has amassed a fortune by his tenacity and diligence. Tagore projected a novel depicting the career of three generations of a family and the first instalment of

Jogāyog came out in the pages of *Vicitrā* under the title *Tin Puruṣ* (Three Generations). Unfortunately he did not proceed beyond the first generation.

Śeṣer Kavitā (The Concluding Poem, 1929) was written at Bangalore (1928). It presents a new technique in story-telling and its mixed form of prose and poetry composition bears only a vague resemblance to the *Campū* in Sanskrit literature. *Śeṣer Kavitā* is fiction coming very close to poetry, and as such the characterization is not as sharp as in the regular novel. It is a love story written as if to end all love stories and its theme is 'modern' in the current sense of the term. The author has shown that love in its most basic form is above any need for consummation. Vicariously Tagore has given here a very effective reply to his very young critics who were writers themselves and considered his poetry as out of vogue. *Śeṣar Kavitā* won the heart of these critics and their change of opinion is reflected in their subsequent writings.

Dui Bon (The Two Sisters, 1933) and *Mālañca* (The Florist's Garden, 1934) are long stories rather than novels. The theme is somewhat similar to that of *Śeṣer Kavitā*. That is, a man's love for woman may have two aspects; he may at the same time love one woman as wife and another as lover, and there is no inherent opposition between the two forms of love although conflict is not debarred. In *Śeṣer Kavitā* there is no conflict; in *Dui Bon* there is a conflict but it ends in harmony, and in *Mālañca* there is conflict for the woman but none for the man.

Cār Adhyāy (Four Chapters, 1934) was written in Ceylon. It is a novel no doubt, but in length it is little more than a long story. Here is an attempt to assess the real motives and values of the revolutionary activities in Bengal that followed the Non-co-operation movement, and Tagore has shown that however exalted a patriotic or philanthropic motive might be, it is never a man's duty to follow it if it is against the grain of his personality or if it goes against the

dictates of his conscience or against his sense of higher morality. Tagore's profound sympathy for the independence movement and his admiration and sympathy for the young men and young women who cared little for their life and happiness in the cause of the country, has found glowing expression in this last novel of his. At the same time his penetrating insight and far-reaching vision have not missed the lurking pitfalls of a bloody revolution. That Tagore's analysis and assessment of the revolutionary movement was essentially true and correct was proved in an indirect way by the lukewarm acceptance of the novel by the general readers when it was first published.

There is a preface where Tagore had made a passing reference to a personal meeting with Brahmabāndhav Upādhyāy, one of the front-rank leaders in the early revolutionary movement, who was one of his chief assistants when the Santiniketan school was first started (1901). It was taken exception to for no plausible reason whatsoever, and Tagore bowed down to public opinion and withdrew the preface.

As a writer of the essay Tagore was distinguished from the very start, although his fame as a poet had for a long time eclipsed his reputation as a writer of prose. Maturity in prose came to Tagore earlier than in poetry, and his first critical essay (1876) shows such an originality of approach as was not then expected from any other writer young or old. Since then Tagore never discontinued writing essays on various topics. They comprise literary appreciation and criticism, social problems and political dilemma, religion and philosophy, music and grammar, travel and autobiography, and wit and humour. Letters form another important category of Tagore's prose writings.

Tagore's essays, whatever may be their subject-matter, belong more to the category of creative art than to the category of critical analysis. His essays on Kālidāsa's poetry and drama and on Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* reveal beauty and

depth that were undiscovered till then. As an interpreter of the soul of India through the ages Tagore has no rival. He has the same deep understanding and admiration for Kabir of Banaras and Lālan Fakir of Kushtia as he has for the Rishis of the Upanishads. It was he who first drew the attention of the cultured world to the mystic poetry of mediaeval and modern India. Nothing escapes his attention if there is any element of abiding beauty and universal truth. Nobody had given any thought to the nursery rhymes in Bengal before Tagore wrote his superb essays on them. It was he who made the first collection of the nursery rhymes in India. On modern literature Tagore still remains the best critic. His *Pañcabhūt* (The Five Elements, 1897) is a book of literary and esthetic criticisms and it is as delightful reading as any work of poetry or fiction. Tagore was interested in Bengali grammar and philology. His *Śabdatattva* (Science of Words, 1909) contains some fundamental discoveries in the phonology of the modern Bengali language. *Baṅglā Bhāṣā Paricay* (Introduction to the Bengali Language, 1939) contains thoughtful suggestions for the grammarians of Bengali.

Tagore has been the best interpreter of the history of ancient India. His keen interest in the past led him to the study of Buddhist texts in the original. This study has been fruitful not only in poetry and drama but in essays also. *Bhāratvarṣer Itihāser Dhārā* (The Trend in the History of India, 1911) reveals to us the fundamental tendencies in the history of our country from the earliest days of Aryan occupation. It may not be, strictly speaking, an historical essay, but it is more than that.

Tagore's essays on religious topics and his weekly sermons at Santiniketan are valuable as literature and their sublime tone and deep earnestness have made them universally acceptable.

In some of his political essays, specially in *Svadeśī Samāj* (Indigenous Society, 1904) and in his presidential address at

the Provincial Conference at Pabna (1906), Tagore drew up a programme for rural reconstruction of our country which is even now far in advance of any outlined by the Government of the present day.

The first book of travel by Tagore is *Yurop-Pravāsīr Patra* (Letters from a Sojourner in Europe, 1881). It is in the form of letters to relatives and friends at home written in a colloquial style. Since then he published six volumes and several uncollected essays on his extensive travels in India and abroad.

Jīvansmṛti (Reminiscences, 1912) is Tagore's autobiography of his early life, from the dawn of memory up to the publication of *Kaḍi O Komal*. Tagore's prose style presents here a sinuousness and flexibility that is entirely captivating. In self-analysis and estimation Tagore has shown rare acuteness and detachment. *Chelebelā* (Boyhood Days, 1940) is written for the young but is no less delightful to the old. The stories of *Galpasalpa* (Chit-Chats, 1941), also written for the young, are based on episodes of his infancy and early boyhood.

The pen of Rabindranath Tagore raised letter writing to the status of a literary *genre* in Bengali. Throughout his long life Tagore wrote innumerable letters and almost all of them are full of literary grace and rich in thoughtful content. Some of Tagore's letters are available in several volumes but the bulk of them are awaiting collection and publication. *Chinnapatra* (Torn Letters, 1912) contains excerpts from letters written to friends and relations. For a deeper understanding of some of the contemporaneous poems and short stories *Chinnapatra* is indispensable.

Tagore's last role as a creative artist was that of the painter. He had no previous practice or training in drawing or painting, but in his early sixties he came out all on a sudden as a master of his own peculiar style of art. It started from the crisscross scratches in the rough copy of his poems. These idle scratches, as Tagore once wrote to a friend, would urge him subconsciously at it were to give

them utterance. The inspiration and urge of Tagore as an artist is different from his literary inspiration and urge. In the latter the idea emerged first and then it took shape in writing while in the former the line came first and the idea followed as the shape grew. The roots of his pictorial art go deeper than those of his literary art ; they reach down to the subconscious, and in a sense they are complementary to their literary counterparts. The grotesque, the gloomy and the mysterious feature in his drawings and paintings but not in his poems. This perhaps makes Tagore the completest man of art the world has ever known.

23

BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Recrudescence of orthodoxy in religious and cultural thought loomed large as a menace to progress in intellectual and literary activities in the last years of the nineteenth century. Against this Rabindranath Tagore fought almost single-handed and won the first round. The worthy adversaries were silenced but the smaller reactionaries could not be eliminated easily, as they had the weekly *Vaṅgavāsī* as their most vociferous organ and had satirists like Yogendrachandra Basu, Indranath Banerji and Kaliprasanna Kavyavisharad as their vanguard. No doubt *Sañjīvanī* voiced the opinion of the advanced Brahmo community as well as of the unbiased educated men in general. But *Sañjīvanī*, edited by Krishnakumar Mitra, was more interested in politics than in religion and culture. So the Tagores and their friends felt the necessity of a weekly journal that would be more comprehensive in its scope, and the result was *Hitavādī* (April 1891). Dwijendranath Tagore chose for its motto the line from Bhāravi: *hitaṃ manohāri ca durlabhaṃ vacaḥ* (Rare is the speech that is good as well as pleasing). Rabindranath was put in charge of the literary section and to entertain the readers he took to writing short stories, six of which were published in the first few issues of the paper. The paper ran at a considerable loss and the sponsors handed it over to a new management. Rabindranath's connection with *Hitavādī* was soon severed.

But the new urge remained persistent. Tagore felt that it was now time that fresh minds should be brought to literature, who would strive to reduce the growing gap between our life and literature and to create a healthy atmosphere of independent and progressive thinking and would thus bring in new openings in the literary field. With these ends in view Tagore started the monthly *Sādhanā* (November

1891). He nominated as editor his young nephew Sudhindranath Tagore who had just obtained the Bachelor's degree in Arts, but the editorial work was done by him and he was sometimes the sole contributor of an issue. *Sādhanā* ran for four years, and during the last year the name of Tagore appeared as editor. The motto of *Sādhanā* speaks for itself.

> Go ahead, go ahead, brother. To lag behind and to stay put is no good. Why should we keep the dead alive, brother? Go ahead, go ahead, brother.

Tagore made a double call for help. He wanted as writers some of his worthy friends who did not write but did think independently, and who were well read in European literature and therefore possessed the essential equipment of a modern writer. There were three such persons in his view: Asutosh Chaudhuri then a barrister-at-law (later a judge of the Calcutta High Court), Lokendranath Palit an Indian Civil Servant and Pramathanath (later Pramatha) Chaudhuri, a young brother of Asutosh, who later became a barrister-at-law. Asutosh had married a niece of Tagore and the younger Chaudhuri followed suit. Palit for some time was a fellow student of Tagore in the University College, London. Asutosh had written a few good articles on some English poets in *Bhāratī*. He was now a rising member of the High Court Bar and could not be weaned away from the practice of law. Younger Chaudhuri came diffidently, and as he was soon to go away to England for qualifying himself for the Bar he could contribute only a paper or two. Palit alone was left as the main hope. At that time Palit used to write verse in English. One of his poems was translated by Tagore into Bengali and this translation is incorporated in *Mānasī*. Palit also attempted Bengali verse but none of it is known except a very few pieces published in *Sādhanā* and *Bhāratī*. But Palit felt no inclination to come out as a writer. He would rather have discussions on literature by

correspondence. On this question he and Tagore exchanged some letters, and Tagore on the whole agreed with him. So Tagore wrote back to Palit on the eve of the publication of the first issue of *Sādhanā*:

> Your suggestion is very right. It is much easier to write to a friend than to contribute articles to monthlies as our thoughts, like wild deer, vanish quickly when they encounter unfamiliar beings. On the other hand stereotyped thoughts, like the tame deer, do not show the sprightliness and spontaneity of the woods.
>
> There need not be any thorough or systematic discussion on a particular topic and there is no necessity of arriving at a conclusion. It would suffice if the impact of the two minds produces currents of thought, sparkling and alternating with light and shade. In the literary field there is seldom any opportunity for this. There everybody is eager to give a definite and final opinion. For this reason our monthly journals have become museums of dead thoughts and opinions.
>
> A truth is good and wholesome if it is connected in some way or other with the life of man.
>
> Let us try to express what we feel as a truth in such a manner that the reader can forthwith feel that it is a revelation from his own mind. Let my own opinions and feeling of good and bad, my own doubts and beliefs, and my own past and present, be amalgamated with it and then only the truth would not come out as a dead lump.
>
> I think this is a basic principle of literature.

Tagore's aims were not wholly realized. Palit could not be drawn to the literary field and Tagore was left alone to work it out. But he succeeded in drawing the attention of some of the young writers to the life around. He also attempted to create an interest in our cultural history. Thus he wrote in the prefatory article in the first issue of *Aitihāsik*

Citra (1899), an historical journal edited by Akshaykumar Maitreya:

> One can acquire scholarship by committing to memory all the books on history written by the foreigners and by securing high marks in the examinations. But scholarship can never be the only end for the efforts in collecting the materials and writing the history of our own country. It helps to stir our stagnant thoughts and make them flow in a current, and by that attempt we achieve the health of our mind and our thoughts become alive.

Among the few distinguished contributors to *Sādhanā* were Ramendrasundar Trivedi (1864-1919) and Umeschandra Batabyal (1852-1898). Trivedi was a science professor in a Calcutta college and later its Principal. He was deeply interested in the study of our ancient religion, culture and philosophy and also in the Bengali language and literature. He is one of the best known essayists in the language and his writings are remarkable for deep and varied scholarship and for compact and adequate expression. As an intelligent writer and as a nationalist he was considered as second only to Tagore. *Prakṛiti* (Nature, 1896) is his first book of essays on scientific subjects. *Jijñāsā* (Query, 1903) and *Karmakathā* (Talks on Karma, 1913) are collections of his reflective and philosophical essays. The linguistic papers are collected in *Śabdakathā* (Talks on the Word, 1917). Three more volumes of collected essays were published posthumously. He translated into Bengali *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,* the oldest of the Vedic prose texts. Jogeshchandra Ray Vidyanidhi (1859-1956) was another science professor deeply interested in our old culture and in the Bengali language. Ray was a rather late-comer in the literary field and he was not a contributor to *Sādhanā.* He wrote in a simple and forceful style of his own. He tried to simplify the Bengali typography, and his attempts smoothed the way for the adoption of the

Bengali linotype. Ray's work on Bengali dialect vocabulary is an outstanding contribution to Bengali linguistics. Among his valuable research works is to be included *Āmāder Jyotiṣī O Jyotiṣ* (Our Astronomers and Astronomy, 1903).

Umeshcandra Batabyal (1852-98) was a Sanskrit scholar with a critical mind. His articles on Vedic history and interpretation and on the Sāṅkhya philosophy are important contributions in the language. The articles on the Sāṅkhya philosophy published in *Sādhanā* were published posthumously under the title *Sāṅkhyadarśan* (1899).

Akshaykumar Maitreya (1861-1930) was a lawyer practising at Rajshahi. He was deeply interested in the history of our country, and was one of the principal contributors to *Sādhanā.* Maitreya was one of the pioneers in archaeological research in India in the present century, and he was one of the founders of Varendra Research Society at Rajshahi. He was an able writer of Bengali prose, and was considered as one of our leading historians during the days of the Swadeshi movement. His works include *Sirājaddaulā* (1897), *Mīrkāśim* (1904) and *Phiriṅgī Vaṇik* (The European Merchants, 1922). The first two books helped much to popularize the life-story of the last two Nabobs of Bengal to the educated Bengali. They show the first attempts on the part of Indian scholars to read history independently and from a nationalistic viewpoint.

In this connection another literary figure also looms large. Sakhārām Gaṇeś Deuskar (d. 1916) was born of a Maratha family settled for generations at Deoghar which was then within the boundaries of Bengal. He had read Bengali at school and he spoke and wrote it much better than the common writers of the language. Deuskar began his career as a school teacher, but the political movement led by Bāl Gangādhar Tilak in Maharashtra moved him as it did hundreds of other young men in Bengal. Bengal now felt a curious interest in Maratha history, specially in the life and activities of the nineteenth century Maratha men and women

who had resisted the British power in India. Deuskar took upon himself the task of writing their history. The result of his investigations were incorporated in the following books: *Bajīrāo* (1899), *Jhānsīr Rājkumār* (The Prince of Jhansi, 1901) and *Ānandī Bāi* (1903). Deuskar was also interested in some of the burning problems of the country as is shewn by his pamphlets *Kṛṣaker Sarvanāś* (Ruination of the Cultivator, 1904), *Deśer Kathā* (Talks on the Country, 1904), etc. Deuskar was a successful journalist; for some years he was the assistant editor of *Hitavādī*.

Among the younger contributors to *Sādhanā* the most promising was Balendranath Tagore (1870-99), a nephew in whom Rabindranath Tagore took great interest. Balendranath was a student of Calcutta Sanskrit College and was well read in English too. He wrote prose and verse but his real mettle was prose. His prose writings are all essays mainly on our ancient literature and art. Some of the essays which had appeared in *Sādhanā* and *Bhāratī* were collected in a small volume entitled *Citra O Kāvya* (Picture and Poetry, 1894). Balendranath published his poems, almost exclusively sonnets, in two brochures: *Mādhavikā* (1896) and *Śrāvaṇī* (1897). These are all love poems, colourful and sensuous, sometimes revealing the influence of his uncle's poetry. The young Tagore's writings, prose and poetry, had promise which was not destined to be fulfilled.

One of the chief directions of the activities of the *Sādhanā* period was for understanding the life of the common people. The common man now took a forefront in literature through the short stories of Tagore. Tagore also invited some of his young friends to treat the uneventful life of the ordinary men and women in short stories and sketches. The first writer to respond to his call was his old friend Srischandra Majumdar (d. 1908) who was then a revenue officer posted in rural Bihar. He wrote for *Sādhanā* some sketches revealing the life of the peasantry in south Bihar. Majumdar's younger brother Saileschandra (d. 1914) also contributed some stories

and sketches describing mainly the frustrations and futilities that were the common lot of the lower middle class young men of Bengal. These stories and sketches were collected under the title *Citra-Vicitra* (Pictures and Varieties, 1902). Śaratkumārī Chaudhurāṇī (1861,1920), wife of Akshaychandra Chaudhuri, both family friends of the Tagores, wrote some fine sketches of the women's department in the Bengali home. These were later collected in the volumes *Śubhavivāha* (Marriage Ceremony, 1905). One of the most outstanding books of this type is Jatindramohan Sinha's (1858-1937) *Uḍiṣyār Citra* (Sketches from Orissa, 1903) depicting the daily life of the Oria people, rich and poor. These sketches were first serialized in *Bhāratī* (1900-1902). Sinha was a government revenue officer posted in Orissa. He wrote some novels and stories also. Latterly, however, he became a champion of the orthodox school that denounced some works of Tagore and produced the book *Sāhityer Svāsthyarakṣā* (Preservation of the Health of Literature, 1922).

Prabhatkumār Mukherji (1873-1932), the best known short story writer after Tagore, started his literary life as a writer of verse, like any other literary-minded educated young man of the time. It was Tagore who advised him to give it up and to write prose and preferably short stories. His first attempt in prose writing was a review of Tagore's newly published book of poems, *Citrā*. The review was published in *Dāsī* in May 1896. This was the first open defence of Tagore's poetry against the attacks by the ignorant, the prejudiced and the spiteful. Mukherji's first short story, obviously an adaptation from English, appeared four months later. About two years later he started writing short stories regularly for *Bhāratī*, and his first four original stories appeared when Tagore was the editor of the magazine (1898-99). Mukherji went to England (1901) to qualify himself for the Bar but he did not stop writing stories for *Bhāratī*. He wrote his first novel *Ramāsundarī* when he was in England. The scene in some chapters of the novel was laid

in Kashmir. Mukherji had never been to that part of India, and he gathered the necessary scenic and topographical details from the British Museum. His description of the country was so vivid that on reading the novel for a second time Tagore was allured to visit Kashmir (1914). After his return to India Mukherji practised law first at Rangpur, then at Gaya and finally at Calcutta. But he did give up law for literature although he remained till the last a lecturer in law at the University Law College, Calcutta. His main occupation for the last ten or twelve years was the editing of the monthly magazine *Mānasī O Marmavāṇī,* in collaboration with its sponsor Jagadindranath Ray, Maharaja of Natore.

Mukherji's books of short stories number more than a dozen. Of these the best known are: *Navakathā* (New Tales,1900), *Ṣoḍaśī* (Sweet Sixteen, 1906), *Deśī O Bilātī* (Native and Foreign, 1910), *Galpāñjali* (Story Offerings, 1913), *Galpavīthi* (Garden Row of Stories, 1916), *Patrapuṣpa* (Leaves and Blossoms, 1917), *Gahanār Bākṣa* (The Jewelery Box, 1921), *Hatāś Premik* (The Disappointed Lover, 1923), *Nūtan Bau* (The Newly Married Wife, 1928), and *Jāmātā Bābāji* (Dear Son-in-law, 1931). He wrote some novels also: *Ramāsundarī* (1907), *Navīn Sannyāsi* (The Young Sannyasi, 1912), *Ratnadīp* (The Jewel Lamp, 1915), *Jīvaner Mūlya* (A Price for Life, 1916), *Sindur-Kouṭā* (The Vermilion Box, 1919), etc. All his novels were first serialized in periodicals.

Mukherji's novels are not good as histories but they are always readable. The plot has generally a factual basis and incidents are spotlighted like short stories. Some of the minor characters are brilliantly drawn. But there is seldom an organic wholeness and growth which is expected in a novel. He was interested in situations and behaviours in a limited field. This stood in the way of his being a successful novelist.

Success in story writing came easily to Mukherji, as he did, from the start, avoid the influence of Tagore. Tagore

saw life to its inner depths but Mukherji saw it on the upper surface which is visible to us. Mukherji's stories reveal a spirit of *bonhomie* and a love for life that is always worth living, in spite of trials and sorrows, failures and breakdowns, a life that is familiar. Mukherji was born in a West Bengal village, had his school and college education in Bihar, had lived for a time in a Calcutta students' mess house, had been to Britain and for some years in his early career as a barrister-at-law had had the experience of coming in contact with people in north Bengal and south Bihar. Everywhere he was attracted by the life and conduct of man. Even animals were not outside his sympathetic notice. He was perhaps the first to write animal stories in Bengali where the beast is an equal partner with man. Life of the lower middle class, specially students and young men just started on their career, was specially attractive to him. He has given us invaluable pictures of the life in students' mess houses in Calcutta, the life in isolated railway quarters in outside stations, the life in the mufassil bar, the life in the Bengali quarter in Banaras and the life of Bengali young men as students in Edinborough and London. It was Mukherji who first extended the horizons of the Bengali life beyond Bengal and even beyond India.

There were a few others who wrote some good short stories. Of them two are worth mention. Sudhindranath Tagore (1869-1929) a nephew of Rabindranath, who as we have seen was chosen as the editor of *Sādhanā*, produced some good short stories collected later in several small volumes: *Mañjūṣā* (1903), *Karaṅka* (1912) and *Citrālī* (1916), etc. Surendranath Majumdar (d. 1931) was a revenue officer in Bihar. He had good training in classical music. He wrote a few short stories which had appeared exclusively in *Sāhitya* and were collected in two rather small volumes: *Choṭa Choṭa Galpa* (1915) and *Karmayoger Ṭikā* (1918). Majumdar's stories are written in a crisp and syncopated style of his own, which is entirely suitable to the light-hearted

treatment of the theme. But his stories have never been as widely read as they should have been ; the reason seems to be two-fold: the style appears to be rather stumbling to the common reader and the stories appeared in a periodical which was not as widely circulated at *Bhāratī*.

Tagore started *Sādhanā* after he had just given up charge of the literary section of the weekly *Hitavādi*. A year earlier the monthly magazine *Sāhitya* was started by Sureshchandra Samajpati (1870-1921), a grandson and ward of Vidyasagar. In a few years *Sāhitya* began to draw the attention of the reading public, not only for the reading matter but for the illustrations as well. It was the first magazine in Bengali that regularly published halftone reproductions of the best productions of mediaeval and modern European art. Another regular feature was the summary of important papers and books published in English. Trenchant criticism, not unoften with malice, of contemporary Bengali journals, was to the common reader the most enjoyable item in an issue of the journal. The contributors were mostly well known. Devendranath Sen's poems appeared regularly, and also Aksay Kumar Baral's tardy efforts as often as they were produced. Tagore contributed poems very occasionally and only in the first few years. Young writers of verse always found ready welcome in *Sāhitya*. Some of these young writers were not often disposed kindly to Tagore, and they gradually made the periodical hostile to Tagore and his writings. From 1899 the literary field in Calcutta was sharply divided into two camps: the Tagores' (or the *Bhāratī*) and Samajpati's (or the *Sāhitya*). But some of the major contributors of Samajpati's paper, for instance Devendranath Sen and Ramendrasundar Trivedi, never became camp-followers of Samajpati. The neutrals also were not few. Among them were many young writers of verse. By 1905 the *Sāhitya* coterie came under the leadership of Dwijendralal Ray and became openly hostile to Tagore. But *Pravāsī* (started in 1903 from Allahabad by Ramananda

Chatterji the editor of *Modern Review*) took up the cause of Tagore by giving prominence to his writings in its pages. From 1905 up to Tagore's death (1941) *Pravāsī* was almost the exclusive periodical that had the privilege of the first publication of Tagore's writings. Chatterji's journal was also a staunch supporter of the new school of Oriental Art founded by Abanindranath Tagore and for a long time *Pravāsī* was the most important journal published in an Indian language. It stood for progressiveness in literature, art and social reform as well as in constructive political thought.

In 1901 Srischandra Majumdar, the novelist and a close friend of Tagore, revived *Vaṅgadarśan* with Tagore as the editor. A few months earlier the poet had started his school (Brahmavidyālay) at Santiniketan and had for some months Brahmabāndhav Upādhyāy (1861-1910) as his assistant. Upādhyāy was a forceful and dynamic personality. He was born a high class (Kulīn) brahman, embraced Christianity (first the Protestant, then the Catholic faith) and finally became a Christian-Vedantist sannyasi. He was perhaps the guiding soul in the early revolutionary movement in Bengal and conducted its fiery organ *Sandhyā*. Upādhyāy bore the promise of a very provocative writer of prose in the first year of the new series of *Vaṅgadarśan*.

Among the young poets contributing to the journal, undoubtedly the best was Priyaṁvadā Devī (1871-1935), who came from a gifted family. (Her mother Prasannamayī Devī was well known for her books of verse published in the eighties of the last century. Two of her maternal uncles were Asutos and Pramatha Caudhuri.) She had already published a book of sonnets, *Reṇu* (1900), which was very well received. Priyaṁvadā continued to write verse to the very last, and some of her later poems are collected in three small books: *Patralekhā* (1910), *Aṃśu* (1927) and *Campā O Pāṭal* (1939). Priyaṁvadā's poems are redolent with the soft fragrance of a woman's heart; the tone is quiet, tender

and subdued. It will be sufficient to say that Tagore was led to think that some of her very short poems that had appeared without signature in *Vaṅgadarśan* were from his own pen.

Another promising writer of verse in *Vaṅgadarśan* was Satichandra Ray (1882-1904), a very young teacher in Santiniketan who had won the affection of the poet. An untimely death removed the possibility of the emergence of a very capable writer in Bengali.

On the occasion of Tagore's completion of fifty years Bangīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, led by Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Jagadischandra Basu, Praphullachandra Ray, Saradacharan Mitra, Manindrachandra Nandi (Maharaja of Cossimbazar), Jagadindranath Ray (Maharaja of Natore) and some other prominent men of Bengal, organized a reception to the poet at the Town Hall in Calcutta on January 28, 1912. An enthusiastically organized and artistically arranged celebration like this had never been held before. The malicious voice of Tagore's detracters was completely drowned and was finally smothered in 1913 when the Nobel Prize came to him. The real significance of this award to an Indian has been mentioned in the foregoing chapter. But nothing can be more erroneous than the belief that Tagore's first public recognition came from the West. The Town Hall reception made history in India.

24

WORLD WAR TO NON-CO-OPERATION

THE revolutionary movement in Bengal went underground under the repressive policy of the Government and in consequence it drew sympathy and all possible help from the younger generation. The more sensible of the older generation admired the stout-heartedness and spirit of extreme self-sacrifice displayed but at the same time they were fully alive to the harm the movement was sure to do to the morale of a people saturated for innumerable generations in the spirit of tolerance and non-violence. More regrettable was the loss of intelligent man-power in the constructive programmes of social, intellectual and industrial advancement. Tagore was perhaps the only man who had been from the very beginning fully aware of these very serious threats to the all-round progress of the country. But what perturbed him even more was a growing tendency to drape the spirit of violence (which is admissible or even justifiable under certain circumstances in a worldly context) in the holy robes of sentimentality and devotion of a Hindu religious faith. He had already given up editing *Vaṅgadarśan* and was now feeling the urgent necessity of a journal that would stand boldly for progressiveness in thought and action and not care for popularity and financial return. One of his nominees in the days of *Sādhanā,* who could not be drawn out then was now chosen as editor of the projected periodical Pramatha Chaudhuri (1868-1948) who had married a niece of Tagore and was now a member of the High Court bar at Calcutta was eminently fit for the job. For some time he had been writing prose and poetry in the pages of *Bhāratī* and his writings were distinguished by a sharpness and sparkle of style and by a precision and clarity of thought that were all his own.

Sabujpatra (Green Leaf) came out in May 1914. Its

convenient size, neat format and absence of advertisements were a pleasing novelty. There was no illustration except the insignia of a palm-leaf in silhouette printed on the green paper cover. The palm-leaf was chosen as the enduringly evergreen leaf of a tree that stands solitary and belligerent over the tops of other vegetation. The main contributors, in some issues the only contributors, were Tagore and the editor. The other writers were all young men who followed the lead of Tagore and attended the *salon* of Chaudhuri and they all believed in clear and individual thinking and in simple and direct writing. The journal advocated with all emphasis the closing up of the widening gulf between the language of the pen and the language of the tongue. Tagore and Chaudhuri took the lead in the adoption of the 'Calit-bhāṣā' (the Standard Colloquial) in place of the highly Sanskritized 'Sādhu-bhāṣā'.

Chaudhuri's cultivation of poetry did not last long, and his poems, mostly sonnets, were collected in two thin books of verse: *Sanet-pañcaśat* (Half a Century of Sonnets, 1913) and *Padacāraṇ* (Walk in Steps, 1919). His essays on literary, political and social topics—witty, incisive, thoughtful and original—were collected in books and pamphlets such as *Tel Nun Lakḍi* (Oil, Salt and Firewood, 1906), *Bīrbaler Hāl-khātā* (The Current Journal of Bīrbal, 1917), *Nānā-kathā* (Assorted Talks, 1919), *Du-iyārki* (Diarchy, 1920), *Nānā-carcā* (Miscellaneous Discussions, 1932), etc. His pungent essays were generally published in his pen-name 'Bīrbal'. The choice of the name indicated that like the famous courtier of Akbar he attempted to stimulate his audience with epigrammatic wit. Chaudhuri wrote some very good short stories, among which the first and the best were the quartet *Cār-iyārī-kathā* (Tales of Four Friends, 1916).

A year or two before the first appearance of *Sabujpatra,* some fresh blood was infused in the old monthly *Bhāratī* by a group of young writers headed by Manilal Ganguli (1888-1929) and his friends who drew their inspiration partly

from the Vicitrā Sabhā, a literary and cultural gathering held in Rabindranath Tagore's house in Calcutta and presided over by him. Gaganendranath and Avanindranath Tagore were also there as well as the latter's senior students like Sri Asitkumar Haldar (b. 1890) and Sri Nandalal Bose (b. 1883).

Some of the young contributors to *Bhāratī* as well as the editor Ganguli and the joint editor Sri Saurindramohan Mukherji (b. 1884) distinguished themselves as writers of fiction. They included Charuchandra Banerji (1877-1938), Sri Hemendrakumar Ray (b. 1888), Hemendralal Ray (1892-1935), Sureschandra Banerji (1882-*d.*), Sri Premankur Atarthi (b. 1890), Sri Bibhutibhushan Bhatta (b. 1881) and others. A perceptible leaning towards so-called realism was manifest in some of the characteristic short stories and novels produced by the younger members of the *Bhāratī* group presided over by Ganguli.

The most distinguished prose writer of the rejuvenated *Bhāratī* was Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) the founder of the modern school of Indian Art. Abanindranath had been induced by his uncle Rabindranath to take up the pen as far back as 1895 and the result was two very well-written children's story books illustrated by the author, one based on an indigenous folk-tale, the other on the story of Śakuntalā. His next attempts were some stories of Rajput heroism, also intended mainly for juvenile consumption. They first appeared in *Bhāratī* (1904-1908) and were later collected in the two volumes of *Rājkāhinī*. But the most outstanding of the juvenalia by Abanindranath—and all are illustrated by him—are *Bhūtpatarīr Deś* (The Land of Ghosts and Goblins, 1915) and *Khātāñcir Khātā* (An Accountant's Journal, 1916). The former is a phantasy weaving the dreamland magic of nursery tales and of the Arabian Nights. Such a work could come only from the pen of a master equally at home with the pen and the brush. In the last book the writer has created a dreamland out of the too familiar corner of the

homestead. Abanindranath never ceased to write for the young till the last few years of his life. Among his other works the most significant are the short stories and sketches collected in *Pathe-vipathe* (By the Wayside and Astray, 1919), the profusely illustrated essay on Bengali women's folk-rites and their concomitant art, entitled *Bāṅglār Vrata* (1919) and the lectures on art and art criticism delivered as Bageswari Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Calcutta (1923-28), published in book form under the title *Bāgeśwarī Śilpa-prabandhāvalī* (1941). His earlier essays on art that had been published occasionally in *Bhāratī* have been collected only recently in a small volume, *Bhārat-śilpa* (Indian Art). The last books to be produced by Abanindranath are autobiographical. *Gharoyā* (Homely Talk, 1941) and *Joḍāsāṅkor Dhāre* (By the Side of Jorasanko, 1944), both written in collaboration with Srimati Rānī Chanda, contain many interesting facts and episodes of the Tagore family.

Abanindranath was not directly concerned with the *Bhāratī* group and of course he was never seen at the *salon* his son-in-law Manilal Ganguli held every evening on the top floor hall of the building where the office of the periodical and the printing press were housed. But he supplied direct inspiration to the young writers whose love for Indian art, preference for the leisurely and spacious way of life, cultivation of artistic habit and temperament and a liking for Persian poetry (no doubt connected with Mughal paintings and with Omar Khayyam) were received mainly from Abanindranath.

SATYENDRANATH DATTA (1882-1922) was a distinguished member of the *Bhāratī* group. He was a poet who exerted influence on almost all the contemporary writers of Bengali verse, much more than Tagore ever did. Tagore could be copied occasionally but never followed successfully; while Datta could be always imitated with success and profit.

Satyendranath was the grandson of Aksaykumar Datta,

the eminent prose writer of the middle nineteenth century. The grandfather's thirst for exact knowledge, his spirit of enquiry, his quiet manner of living and his patriotic feelings were inherited by the grandson and are reflected in his works. Datta was readily responsive to the social and political movements that agitated the country. He started writing verse when the Swadeshi movement was just on and death cut off his career when the Non-co-operation movement was in full swing. Datta's two earliest poems were published as pamphlets (1900, 1905). These and other earlier poems published in *Veṇu O Vīṇā* (The Flute and the Lute, 1906) and *Homaśikhā* (Sacrificial Flame, 1907) show influence of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Devendranath Sen and Aksaykumar Baral. It was perhaps the writings of the last two poets that had drawn him as a very young man to the coterie of *Sāhitya*. The influence of his college friend Satischandra Ray made him acquainted with Tagore and his works.

Datta knew that it was futile to copy Tagore's poetry and he felt that delving into deep feeling and churning of profound emotion were not for him. He chose the only way out by cultivating the picturesque form of poetry that depends upon lexical cadence and metrical sonority rather than upon emotive sensuousness. Maturity is noticeable in his third book of original verse, *Phuler Phasal* (The Crops of Flowers, 1911), apparently taken from the familiar phrase in Persian poetry 'phasl-e-gul'. It is maintained in the succeeding volume *Kuhu O Kekā* (The Cuckoo and the Peacock, 1912). The poems in *Tulir Likhan* (Writings of the Brush, 1914) are all of the 'gāthā' or ballad type and were written in the rainy months of 1909. The poems of *Abhra Ābīr* (Mica-and-Vermilion Dust, 1916), written between 1913 and 1915, reveal the poet's complete pre-occupation with experiments in metrical variety. No quotation in translation can adequately show the success which Datta achieved in this field.

Datta was more at his ease in his humorous and satirical

poems. A small collection of these was published in 1917 under the title *Hasantikā* (Sparkles from the Forge). In many of these poems Datta is as bitter and slashing as Pramatha Chaudhuri was in some of his essays. To give an example. In the presidential address at the eighth session of Bengali Literary Conference (Vangīya Sāhitya Sammilan) at Burdwan in April 1914, Haraprasad Shastri had said that contemporary Bengali writers were producing only small and light compositions but nothing that can be taken as big or massive or ponderous. Datta's reply to this charge was given in a poem published in *Pravāsī* the very next month. To quote a portion in translation:

> Look here. The originator of the Sankhya philosophy could produce only a few dozens of tiny *sūtras* and so he could not secure a chair at any conference. O my brother! had he but produced three volumes instead, the scholars would have been convinced and the poor fellow could have managed to be elected a sectional chairman at least in the philosophy section (of a learned conference). Alas! the poor fellow chose to be brief and so he wrote only a few unintelligible words and thus he missed the appointment as a lecturer enjoying a (University) fellowship in this land of Jambu.

The end of the first World War brought in a disillusionment to many who were expecting some relief from the pressure of foreign domination. This disappointment brought about a favourable condition for the Non-co-operation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. Datta, unlike some of his sober-minded compatriots, welcomed the movement with enthusiasm, and his poetry was the first in Indian literature to be vocal in its praise. At the first burst of enthusiasm all that had been done by the British appeared bad, and sympathy for the labouring class took a new significance. So Datta wrote in his *Carkār Gān* (The Song of the Charkha):

> The western civilization is the demon Fire-eye withering (everything it gazes at). It has built mills that sap the vitality of young men. Volumes of smoke from the chimneys blast the ploughlands and pastures. The Ganga has come to be only a channel for the septic tanks (of the mills).

The poems written from 1914 up to his death are collected in two books *Belāśeṣer Gān* (The Song of the Day's End) and *Bidāy Ārati* (The Last Greeting) both published posthumously (1922). In these poems there is no further development but there is some ease in the diction and more spontaneity in rhythm. The poet's preference for dialectal words is more pronounced than ever. Some of these poems are among the best Datta ever wrote, and in his best poems the reader is captivated by a series of pictures and snapshots evoked by the carefully chosen words and aided by the quick beating of the metrical rhythm. Poems like *Pālkir Gān* (The Song of the Palanquin) and *Dūrer Pāllā* (A Distant Journey) are among these.

Satyendranath Datta wrote some prose also. Most of his essays are satirical and, like his satirical poems, are signed by his pen-name 'Navakumār Kaviratna'. One long essay, rather of the size of a monograph, is interesting. It is entitled *Chandaḥ Sarasvatī* (The Rhyme Deity) and was published in *Bhāratī* (1918). Put in the form of a phantasy, mainly in verse, it is a poetic exposition of the nature, quality and tendency of the Bengali metre. Datta translated some short plays of English and Continental writers such as Stephen Phillips, P. H. Pearse and Maurice Maeterlinck. These translations are collected in the volume *Raṅgamallī* (1913). His only original dramatic piece (*Dhūper Dhoṁyāy* (In Incense Smoke, *Bhāratī*, 1920), is a humorous playlet with an entirely feminine cast. The plot is laid in the inner apartments of king Daśaratha. The author took considerable pains to reconstruct the hoary atmosphere by giving stage

and costume directions in detail.

Datta had also begun a historical novel written entirely in the colloquial style but it was never completed. The only fiction standing to his credit is *Janmaduḥkhī* (1912), and it is a translation of *Livsslaven* by the Norwegian writer Jonas Lie. This translation indicates Datta's sympathy for the down-trodden labour class. *Cīner Dhūp* (Chinese Incense, 1912) contains four short essays introducing Taoism and Confucianism to the Bengali reader.

Datta translated poems from almost all important classical and modern languages of the world. He knew Sanskrit and English very well and had a working knowledge of French. He knew some Persian and had a smattering knowledge of a few Indian and one or two other European languages. His "originals" therefore were largely English translations. The poems in translation were published in three volumes: *Tīrthasalil* (Holy Waters, 1908), *Tīrtha-reṇu* (Holy Dust, 1910) and *Maṇimañjūṣā* (A Jewel Casket, 1915). The poems translated include Vedic hymns and classical Sanskrit verses, modern Indian poems in Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric and Tibeto-Burman languages, Chinese and Japanese poems, Malayan poems, English poems and classical and modern European poems. Among the English and European (German and French) poets translated by Datta are Alfred Austin, Robert Bridges, William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, Arno Holz, Victor Hugo, Maurice Maeterlinck, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Sully Prudhomme, Paul Valery, Emile Verhaeren, etc.

Datta excelled in translation. His translations may not always be very faithful but their Bengali garb is impeccable.

SOME good poetry and much readable verse were written by the literary enthusiasts in the second decade of this century. Many of them could not avoid the influence of Datta's pretty versification and they wrote verse that was acceptable to the

reading public. One of the very few writers immune to Datta's influence was Dwijendranarayan Bagchi (1873-1927). Bagchi was an ardent lover of Tagore's poetry and his own verse is redolent of Tagore. He did not write much and has left for us a single book of verse *Ektārā* (One-Stringed Lute, 1917). Dwijendranarayan's cousin Jatindramohan Bagchi (1878-1948) also was an admirer of Tagore's poetry. The younger Bagchi's poems were published in the best periodicals since 1899. They are collected in several books such as *Lekhā* (Writing, 1906), *Rekhā* (Drawing, 1910), *Aparājitā* (1913), *Nāgkeśar* (1917), *Nīhārikā* (1927), etc. Jatindramohan's verse is smooth and picturesque. Like many of his contemporaries a love for the simple life and the rural landscape is manifest in his best efforts.

Karuṇanidhan Banerji (1877-1955), Sri Kumudranjan Mallik (b. 1882) and Sri Kalidas Ray (b. 1889) may be grouped together for their profession, if not for their attitude to poetry. They have all been school teachers. Banerji made his first appearance in 1901 with the slender *Baṅga-maṅgal,* a paean at the first outburst of the Swadeshi movement. It was immature verse but the promise was there and it made him known to the general reader. His subsequent books of verse are *Prasādī* (Blessed Food, 1904), *Jharā-phul* (Fallen Flowers, 1911), *Śāntijal* (Blessed Water, 1913), *Dhāndūrvā* (1921) and *Ravīndra-ārati* (Homage to Rabindranath, 1937). Banerji's poems are simple and sincere and they remind us of Devendranath Sen. He did not write over much and did not handle many themes.

Mallik is different from Banerji and Bagchi in approach. He is not merely an admirer of the rural and a lover of the rustic but he rarely acknowledges anything outside the village life. He is almost a Vaishnav devotee and his verse does not hide it. Mallik is writing verse since 1900 and has produced thirteen small volumes, of which three (*Ujānī, Banatulasī* and *Śatadal*) were published in 1911 and the latest *Svarnasandhyā* (Golden Evening) in 1948. Mallik's poems are short and his

style is unpretentious but spiced with allusions from Puranic lore.

Ray like Bagchi belonged to the literary *entourage* of Jagadindranath Ray, Maharaja of Natore and promoter of the monthly *Mānasī O Marmavāṇī*. Ray has produced eighteen books of poetry, such as *Kunda* (1908), *Kiśalay* (1911), *Parṇapuṭ* (1914), *Kṣudkuṁḍā* (Broken Rice and Chaff, 1922), *Baikālī* (1940), etc. Ray's verse is smooth and easy and is enlivened with a dash of romantic love of nature.

Among the less voluminous writers of contemporary verse mention may be made of Kirandhan Chatterji (1887-1931), a cousin of Manilal Ganguli. Chatterji wrote almost exclusively in *Bhāratī*. He produced only one book of poems, *Natun Khātā* (A Fresh Notebook, 1923), and some poems published subsequently in *Bhāratī* and elsewhere. Chatterji was a poet of homely love, but unlike Devendranath Sen and Karunanidhan Banerji he was not devotionally disposed. His poetry therefore is realistically romantic.

Sukumar Raychaudhuri (1887-1923), the eldest son of Upendrakisor Raychaudhuri (1863-1915), the pioneer of half-tone block printing in India and compiler of one of the best books of nursery tales in Bengali, *Tuṇṭunir Kathā* (The Tales of the Tiny Bird, 1910), was an important member of the *Bhāratī* group. He was a master of the photographic art and he founded in 1921 *Sandeś* (Sweets) which proved to be the best juvenile monthly in Bengali. For this periodical of his he wrote some excellent nursery rhymes which have come to stay as permanent stock in our juvenile literature.

In fiction the traditional form was generally maintained but in content progress was clearly noticeable. Haraprasad Sastri (1853-1931) and his pupil Rakhaldas Banerji (1885 1930), leading Indologists both, achieved success in the historical novel. Sastri's *Beṇer Meye* (The Merchant's Daughter, 1920) is written in a style that is very close to the colloquial. It reconstructs with plausibility and brilliance

the social, domestic and social atmosphere in West Bengal in the eleventh century. His other work of fiction (*Kāñcanmālā*, an historical tale) also is well written. It was first published in *Baṅgadarśan* (1883). Sastri wrote better Bengali than many of his contemporaries, old and young, and although a Sanskritist of the first grade he did not care to load his literary style with learned words and Sanskritisms.

Banerji wrote three domestic and seven historical novels. The latter only are significant productions. *Pāṣaṇer Kathā* (The Story of a Stone, 1914) is not much of a story but it presents convincingly the atmosphere of the Saka period of Indian history. *Karuṇā* (1917) deals with the early days of the decline of the Gupta empire when the aged Kumāragupta was on the throne. *Śaśāṅka* (1914) treats one of the most romantic and elusive figures in the early mediaeval history of Eastern India. *Dharmapāl* (1915) recounts the glorious activities of the greatest ruler of the Pāla dynasty. *Mayūkh* (1917) is a romantic tale pivoted on the conflict between the Mughal and the Portuguese power in Bengal during the reign of Shahjehan. The plot of *Asīm* (1924) is laid in the early eighteenth century Bengal. The plot of *Lutphullā* (serialized, 1927-29) is laid in Delhi under the occupation of Nadir Shah. Two (*Hemakaṇā* and *Dhruvā*) are left incomplete. From a purely literary point of view Banerji's historical novels do not show much advance from Chatterji but what strikes the reader unfailingly is his power of convoking the historical materials (some of which were made available by his own researches) to build up a convincing historical atmosphere.

The younger fiction writers connected with the *Bhāratī* group generally sought escape from the usual tales of love and domestic fiction. The bolder among them even tried to bring in love outside marriage as well as a faint sex note. The most notable writings of this type are: *Mukti* (a story by Manilal Ganguli, first published in *Bhāratī*, 1914), *Paṅkatilak* (a novel by Charuchandra Banerji, 1919) and *Jhaḍer*

Yātrī (a long story by Sri Hemendrakumar Ray, 1923).

The most experienced of the young writers of the *Bhāratī* group was Sri Saurindramohan Mukherji (b. 1884) who was connected with the periodical since 1908, at first as an assistant editor and then as the joint editor. Mukherji had been writing short stories since 1903 and by 1913 he had produced three books of original short stories: *Śephāli* (1909), *Nirjhar* (1911) and *Puṣpak* (1913). The number of his novels, story books and plays up to date is more than a hundred but by far the bulk of them are either adaptations or translations from English. The authors translated include Moliere, Goldsmith, Hugo, Tolstoy, Maeterlinck, Daudet, Gorky, Turgeniev, Maupassant, Haggard, Ma-Tun (Chinese), Dumas, Stevenson, Ruskin, Dickens, Swift, Verne, Hans Andersen, Washington Irving and Lalbehari Dey. Mukherji has written an original play (*Svayaṃvarā,* 1931) on the Sāvitrī story from the *Mahābhārata.* Many of his plays (translated or otherwise) were staged publicly with some success.

Charuchandra Banerji (1876-1938) was not as prolific a writer as Mukherji. But he also began his literary career as a writer of short stories and translated and adapted from English some foreign novels and stories. He produced about a dozen books of short stories, including *Baraṇḍālā* (Welcome Offerings, 1910), *Puṣpapātra* (A Flower Vase, 1910). *Saogāt* (Presents, 1911), *Vanajyotsnā* (Moonlight in the Forest, 1938), etc. Banerji was associated with the periodical *Pravāsī* as the assistant editor until his appointment as a lecturer in Bengali at the University of Dacca. He had occasion to come in touch with Tagore who had supplied him with the themes of at least three of his novels: *Sroter Phul* (A Flower Down-stream, 1915), *Dui Tār* (Two Strings, 1918) and *Herpher* (Loops and Knots, 1919). Banerji's second novel *Pargāchā* (The Parasite, 1917) is perhaps his best work. It is the story of a man unsuccessful in life. For the young, Banerji adapted from English *The Persian Tales* (1910) and *Robinson Crusoe* (1910).

Fiction writers serializing their works in *Mānasī O Marmavāṇī* were not many. Prabhatkumar Mukherji was the foremost among them. Among others mention may be made of Phakirchandra Chatterji (d. 1932) who was one of the founders of the periodical, Manomohan Chatterji, Sri Manik Bhattacharya, Surendranath Ganguli and Indira Devi.

Indira Devi, her younger sister Anurupa Devi and their girlhood friend Nirupama Devi formed what may be called the women group of the novelists of the day, and if Saratchandra Chatterji is included it may as well be called the Bhagalpur school of fiction writers. This school would include some relatives of the ladies and of Chatterji such as Sri Saurindramohan Mukherji, Sri Bibhutibhushan Bhatta, Surendranath Ganguli (1881-1856) and Sri Upendranath Ganguli (b. 1881). Romance and tragedy of love and marriage (monogamous and polygamous) in humdrum domestic life is the common theme of the novels produced by this Bhagalpur group of writers. Sri Saurindramohan Mukherji shows unmistakable allegiance to this school in his first novel *Āṁdhi* (Blinding Dust Storm, serialized in *Bhāratī*, 1911-12). Saratchandra Chatterji was the unquestioned master of the school, although he was one of the last to come out in the open.

SARATCHANDRA CHATTERJI (1876-1938) was bred up in his mother's family at Bhagalpur where he received his school education and college education for two years. The death of his parents wrecked his home life and for some years he was to lead the life of a waif in North Bihar. In 1903 he went to Burma and found employment in Rangoon as a clerk in a government office. On the eve of his departure for Burma he submitted a short story for a prize competition in the name of his uncle Surendranath Ganguli. It won the first prize and was published in 1904. A long story (*Baḍadidi*) was published in two instalments in his own name in

Bhāratī (1907). But his sustained appearance was in 1913 when some of his best known stories were published in the periodicals *Jamunā, Sāhitya* and *Bhāratvarṣa.* The success of these stories assured a steady income for him, and as he was not keeping very fit in Burma he gave up his job, returned to India and settled in suburban Calcutta to take up writing professionally. He was the first novelist in India to live in some comfort on the returns of his output. His instantaneous fame and continued popularity are without a parallel in our literary history. Even Bankim Chandra Chatterji's works, not to say Rabindranath Tagore's, were never received by the general reader with anything like this eagerness and warmth. Chatterji's stories are generally long, and his novels vary in length. The influence of Tagore is there but not his emotional depth and creativeness. In Saratchandra Chatterji's stories and novels the lack of emotion is to some extent compensated by a sentimentalism readily acceptable to the common reader. In spite of the lack of profundity and polish, some of the stories are very striking for their obvious sincerity and basic realism. These include *Bindur Chele* (Bindu's Child, 1913), *Rāmer Sumati* (Ram Returning to Sanity, 1914), *Arakṣaṇīya* (The Girl Whose Marriage is Overdue, 1916), etc.

For various reasons Chatterji's boyhood and early manhood days were not happy. This did not embitter him but it made him unfit to see life sometimes from an oblique angle. Misunderstanding, estrangement and bitterness are there in his stories but everything is smoothed out in the finale so that the end of the story whether happy or not, is always palatable. This combined with his sympathy for the neglected womanhood and his easy, direct and pleasant style of narration has contributed to the attractiveness of his stories.

Saratchandra's earliest writings show striking influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterji. In *Devdās* (written 1901, published 1917), *Pariṇītā* (The Married Girl, 1914), *Birāj Bau* (Mrs. Birāj, 1914) and *Pallī Samāj* (The Village

Commune, 1916), the themes and their treatment are not very much different from the older Chatterji's but they are presented in a modernistic setting and in an easier and more matter-of-fact language. Tagore's influence, specially of his short stories and of his novels *Chokher Bāli* and *Gorā,* is detectable in some of Chatterji's stories and novels. Chatterji was sympathetic to woman repressed at home and tortured occasionally, and he was partial to those who for no commission on their own part incur disapproval or displeasure of the family or community. The social and domestic atmosphere in the stories and novels of Chatterji is, on the whole, of the days long past but the story interest makes the reader forgetful of the plausibility or otherwise of the setup. He is certainly critical of the contemporary society when it is not in agreement with his own ideas but he never flouts the accepted moral basis of the Hindu society of any time.

Chatterji is at his best when he draws from his own experience. To name the more important of such works: *Śrīkānta* in four parts (1917, 1918, 1927, 1933), *Caritrahīn* (1917), *Birāj Bau* (1914), *Pallī Samāj* (1916), the first part of *Devdās* (his first novel) and his first published short story *Mandir* (1904). It may be noted that these (with the exception of the last two parts of *Śrīkānta* which are much below the level of the first two) belong to the first phase of Chatterji's literary career, that is up to 1913 when he had been just recognized as a powerful writer of fiction. The second phase began with a conscious attempt to tackle a plot that is somewhat akin to Tagore's *Gorā*. The result was his biggest novel *Gṛhadāha* (Home Burnt Down, 1919). The spinning out of a thin story is rather wearisome and it was never received with the usual acclamation. Before he finished *Gṛhadāha* Chatterji had reverted to the romantic love story and *Dattā* (The Girl Given Away, serialized 1917-1919) and *Denā-Paonā* (Debts and Demands, 1923) were written. The story of the latter bears strong resemblance to

Leola Dale's Fortune by Charles Garvice. But it cannot be denied that in spite of its loud unfamiliar colour and overdose of romance the tale is pleasantly told.

The revolutionary movement from Bengal operating in Burma and in Far East supplied the background of the romance *Pather Dābī* (The Demand of the Road, 1926). The novel for no cogent reason was proscribed by the Government. In *Bipradās* (1935) Chatterji returns to the domestic novel but it scarcely reveals a new approach or a fresh appraisal. His last complete novel *Śeṣ Praśna* (The Final Question, 1931) is an attempt at the 'intellectual' novel where the meagre theme is inflated by highbrow talks on problems of the individual and of the society relating principally to love and marriage.

Some of the popular tales of Chatterji were dramatized and performed on the public stage with considerable success. Chatterji's works have been repeatedly translated into all the major Indian languages.

WHEN Saratchandra Chatterji was still teen-aged he had gathered round him a host of very young aspirants to literary fame and they organized an informal juvenile literary society and started its handwritten organ *Chāyā* (*circa* 1896). Almost all the members of this band became, in later life, well known as writers of fiction. Chatterji was the seniormost among them and the guiding spirit. He wrote stories that were read at the meetings or circulated in the manuscript journal. These early writings of Chatterji had made a deep impression on the minds of his young admirers. This fact explains the strange similarity in the themes of some of the stories and novels of the Bhagalpur group of story-tellers. These writers were all prize-winners in the short story competitions sponsored by H. Basu, the manufacturer of the hair oil Kuntalin and other perfumes, and some of their early writings were published in the pages of *Bhāratī*.

Sri Saurindramohan Mukherji's works have been previously mentioned. His cousins (granddaughters of Bhudev Mukherji) Indira and Anurupa were the next to come out in print. Indira Devi (1880-1922) has to her credit four volumes of original short stories and a novel, *Sparśamaṇi* (Touchstone, 1918). The novel is well written and the domestic environments are well delineated. She did some translation which is also good. Indira's younger sister Anurupa Devi (1882-1958) was comparatively a prolific writer. Her first novel to be published serially in a periodical is *Jyotihārā* (Light Lost to Her, 1915) but it was her second novel *Poṣyaputra* (The Adopted Son, 1912) that made her name familiar to readers. Her later novels include *Vāgdattā* (The Bethrothed, 1914), *Mantraśakti* (Power of Mantra, 1915), *Mahāniśā* (The Awful Night, 1919), *Mā* (Mother, 1920), etc. *Mantraśakti* is more popular than any other novel of Anurupa Devi. Its theme reminds the reader strongly of *Mandir,* the first story by Saratchandra to appear in print (1904). Anurupa Devi has also written some historical plays.

Sri Bibhutibhushan Bhatta (b. 1881) wrote only stories, mostly short, and he has four books to his credit: *Svecchācārī* (The Self-willed, 1917), *Akājer Kāj* that thes No Consequence, 1920), *Sahajiyā* (1922) and *Śānta* which he Seven Steps of Marriage, 1923). His first sg to the first *ak* (The Octet, 1917) contains also stories wo 191 by his sister Nirupama Devi (1883-1951). Nirupamā wrote some more short stories collected in *Āleyā* (Will O' the Wisp, 1917) and more than a dozen novels. The first of her novels is *Annapūrṇār Mandir* (The Temple of Annapūrṇā, 1913). It shows almost the same theme as Saratchandra Chatterji's short story *Anupamār Prem* (The Love of Anupamā). The best-read of her novels is *Didi* (The Elder Co-Wife, serialized 1912-13, 1915). Her other novels include *Ucchṛṅkhal* (The Unruly, 1920), *Devatra* (Given to God, 1927), etc. Nirupama's novels are readable and are neither too bulky

nor ponderous. Her style is unostentatious and there is no attempt to moralize or to teach. The novel *Śyāmalī* (1919) depicts the dawning of intelligence in the head and warmth in the heart of a girl born halfwit and mute, by the careful tenderness of her young husband to whom she is married by mistake. Recently it has been dramatized and performed with unprecedented success at a public stage in Calcutta.

Srimati Sailabala Ghoshjaya (b. 1894) did not belong to the Bhagalpur group but her name normally comes up with those of Indira, Anurupa and Nirupama as she also wrote from a woman's standpoint although her approach was somewhat different. She too first appeared as a story-writer and then as a writer of the novel. Her first novel *Sekh Āndu* (serialized 1915, 1917) is rather daring in its plot. It is a story of the hopeless love of an educated and cultured Hindu girl for the young Muslim chauffeur of her father. *Miṣṭi-sarbat* (Sweet Drink, 1920) recounts a pleasant story of a Muslim family. *Janma-aparādhī* (Guilty from Birth, 1920) presents a very convincing story. Sailabala has written seven or eight books of short stories, some twenty-four novels and one play.

Srimati Santa Devi (b. 1894) and Srimati Sita Devi (b. 1895), daughters of the veteran journalist Ramananda Chatterji, wrote stories and novels exclusively for *Pravāsī*. They have written some good children's stories. Their first novel *Udyānlatā* (The Garden Creeper, 1919) was a joint venture.

The first number of *Sabujpatra* came out in May 1914 and in November of the same year appeared *Nārāyaṇ* the monthly organ of the opposite camp. Chittaranjan Das (1870-1925) who was then one of the most brilliant members of the High Court bar at Calcutta became the sponsor of the periodical. But its guiding spirit was Bipinchandra Pal (1857-1952). Pal had succeeded Tagore as the editor of *Baṅgadarśan* which ceased publication in 1913. *Nārāyaṇ* was started not with

any definite programme but with the intention of opposing Rabindranath Tagore and those who followed his lead. Haraprasad Shastri was a regular contributor to the periodical. Das wrote poems, and Pal wrote articles and a few stories. Narayanchandra Bhattacharya (d. 1927) was the chief short story writer in *Nārāyaṇ*. He was an indefatigable writer and his books of stories and novels number more than fifty. His first book of stories, *Kathākuñja* (A Bower of Stories) was published in 1907 and his first novel, *Kula-purohit* (The Family Priest) in 1909. As a story-teller Narayanchandra may to some extent be compared with Saratchandra Chatterji, but he lacked the feeling, fire and brilliance of the latter. Sarayubala Dasgupta (1889-1949), daughter of the erudite philosopher Brajendranath Seal, contributed some reflective essays and prose poems. She had just published her first book *Vasanta Prayāṇ* (Passing Away of the Spring, 1914). It is an impersonal treatment of an emotional experience couched in the form of a very thin symbolism. Rabindranath Tagore wrote an introduction. Her other works, similar to the first, are *Triveṇī* (1915) and *Devottar Viśvanāṭya* (Superdivine Play of the Universe, 1916). The last is a symbolic play showing some influence of Tagore. There are direct hints of the very modern problems regarding the relation between labour and capital and between the governed and governing. In all her writings the influence of her philosopher father is detectable.

One of the most thoughtful contributors to *Nārāyaṇ* was Haridas Haldar (1862-1934). He wrote for the journal a few stories on themes more realistic than usual. These were later collected in a small volume entitled *Madan Piyādā* (Bailiff Madan, 1918). Haldar's first book *Gobar Gaṇeśer Gaveṣaṇā* (Researches of A Good-for-Nothing, 1916) attracted the attention of Tagore and was very well received by the thoughtful readers. It contains six essays on some of the burning problems of the day: social, political, judicial, religious and cultural. The style is simple and engaging,

showing rare humour, and the author's analysis is probing.

Satyendrakrishna Gupta wrote some 'realistic' stories for *Nārāyaṇ*. But the person who was really responsible for the later 'realistic' school of fiction writing is Dr. Nareschandra Sengupta (b. 1882). His story *Ṭhāndidi* (Granny) collected in his first book of stories *Dvitīya Pakṣa* (The Second Wife, 1919) appeared first in *Nārāyaṇ* (1918). Dr. Sengupta went to Dacca as the professor of law at the newly founded University. In a few years he returned to Calcutta to practise at the High Court but he had left there the seeds of a new literary movement that called itself 'progressive'. The story in *Nārāyaṇ* was followed by the novels *Śubhā* (1920) and *Śāsti* (1921) where unconventional ideas about sex-relations appear faintly but clear enough to have provoked the wrath of some critics. The next novel *Pāper Chāp* (The Stamp of Sin, 1922), serialized under the title *Meghnād,* deals to some extent boldly with sex and criminology. After it Dr. Sengupta practically returned to the safe and popular path of the Bengali novelists. He has produced up to date about fifty volumes of novels and short stories. He has written also some plays.

After the death of Girishchandra Ghosh there was no remarkable change in the character and production of plays. But there was some slackening in the religious tone in the popular plays and there was also a perceptible reduction in length. D. L. Roy's plays, specially *Nurjāhān* (1908), *Sājāhān* (1909) and *Candragupta* (1911), staged with usual success by some college-student amateurs, brought in a new vogue of the light historical play. Among the writers of popular plays were Kshirodprasad Vidyavinod (1863-1927), Apareshchandra Mukherji (1875-1934), Nishikanta Basuray and others. Vidyavinod, a veteran of the old school, was the first to adapt his plays according to the new trends. His *Kinnarī* (Nymphs, 1918) was by far the most popular opera on the public stage at the time.

A reform in stagecraft was brought about in 1924 by Sri Sisirkumar Bhaduri (b. 1889) a college professor of English and one of the leading members of the young amateurs that had popularized D. L. Roy's plays. In the reform of the public stage and shows Sri Bhaduri received help from Manilal Ganguli and other friends and colleagues. Sri Bhaduri had attended some sessions of Tagore's Vichitrā and had witnessed the performance of *Phālgunī*. He possessed unusual histrionic powers. Thus he was adequately fitted for his task. Sri Bhaduri appeared professionally on the public stage for the first time with Jogeshchandra Chaudhuri's (1887-1948) *Sītā* (1924). It was a tremendous success that turned the course of the history of the Indian stage.

25

INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT TO ANOTHER WORLD WAR

AFTER the first surge of the Non-co-operation movement the political efforts were canalized into alternative spurts of Civil Disobedience and non-co-operation with the British Government in India and of co-operation with the same when some measure of self-government was available. The masses were slowly awakening into a kind of political consciousness and the industrial development of the country appeared to be on a sure footing. English education was permeating at an increasing pace among the rural communities, and the city of Calcutta and the provincial towns were steadily drawing away the life-blood from the rural peripheries. The effect in literature was two-sided. One group of young writers started with a determination to describe the slum life in the city and the suburbs. To this group were soon affiliated the older writers who had started 'realism' in the pages of *Bhāratī* and *Nārāyaṇ*. The chief organ of this new 'modernistic' movement in literature was *Kallol* (Rippling Current) started in 1923 by Gokulchandra Nag and Dineshranjan Das.

Its precursor was a small book containing four short stories named *Jhaḍer Dolā* (The Sweep of the Storm, 1922), written by Gokulchandra Nag, Dineshranjan Das, Srimati Suniti Devi and Sri Manindralal Basu, who as publishers constituted the 'Four Arts Club'. Nag was a student of the Government Art School and Das an amateur actor. Suniti Devi wrote verse and Basu stories. Some of the stories of the young writers of *Kallol* were considered improper according to the accepted literary morals of the time. The journal was by no means a popular one and the contributors were mostly unknown as yet. As such the readers' reaction was not expected for some time. But some other writers (not very young) took up the cudgel against the *Kallol* group

and tried to awaken a hostile reaction by satirizing their writings in a periodical published exclusively for this purpose. It was *Śanibārer Ciṭhi* (The Saturday Post) first published as a weekly (November 1924) and then as a monthly, founded by Sri Asok Chatterji and later conducted by Sri Sajanikanta Das. Some of the darts went home, no doubt, but the desired effect was not manifest. On the other hand, it turned out as vicarious but effective propaganda for the writings of the new 'progressive' school, which otherwise would have escaped notice altogether. Presently two periodicals came out to flank *Kallol*: *Kāli-Kalam* (Ink and Pen, 1927) from Calcutta and *Pragati* (Progress, 1928) from Dacca.

The new 'progressive' writers had all received their sustenance from Tagore but being denied—as some of them confessed—the spirit of Indian tradition they could not fully gauge the depth of Tagore's poetry. Some of these writers were possibly influenced by the rejection of Tagore's poetry as oriental patter by the younger generation of English poets. But the real force behind their anti-Tagore attitude was a recrudescence of hostility against the master and his works. The Dacca section of the 'progressive' group led by Dr. Nareschandra Sengupta the novelist and Mohitlal Mazumdar the poet proclaimed that the day of Tagorean literature was over and accordingly their followers echoed that Tagore was a hindrance to their progress. Thoughtful critics like Sri Nalinikanta Gupta (b. 1889) admitted that some of the 'progressive' writers showed originality of approach and power of expression, but they were definitely against the creation of problems and situations that were not there and also against the imposition of ideas and ideals that were foreign and antagonistic to our mental make-up and cultural tradition.

Tagore was approached on behalf of both the opposing groups for a verdict on the issue between 'traditional' and 'progressive' literature. The position was rather difficult for him but he could not but agree and call a meeting at the

Vichitrā Hall of his Calcutta residence. The protagonists of the two camps and some non-party literary men were invited to attend. There were two sittings (March 1927). On the first day Tagore addressed the meeting and said that the creation of new forms is the main purpose of the literary art and the content—be it imported, adulterated, traditional, or original—matters only so far as it helps in the creation of a new form. He analysed the 'modernness' of the contemporary European literature and denied its validity for the contemporary literature in Bengal. There was a discussion at the second sitting three days later, but no conclusion was arrived at. Tagore's analysis and judgement did not satisfy the 'progressive' group but they kept silent for the time being. Tagore's address was followed by an essay on the essence of literature (*Sāhityar Dharma,* July 1928). Dr. Nareschandra Sengupta wrote in reply his essay *Sāhityadharmer Sīmānā* (Limits of the Essence of Literature, August 1928). Dr. Sengupta accused Tagore of transgressing the limits himself, but his arguments were practically the same as had been put forward by D. L. Roy a score of years before. Dwijendranarayan Bagchi wrote his last essay *Sāhityadharmer Sīmānā Vicār* (Delimitation of the Essence of Literature) and defended Tagore vigorously. Dr. Sengupta wrote a reply to Bagchi's essay. This controversy ensued in the pages of *Vichitrā* and the wrangle might have continued indefinitely had not Tagore stopped it effectively by writing the novel *Śeṣer Kavitā* and by creating the form of 'Gadya Kavitā' (entirely free verse).

An immediate product of the post-war dissatisfaction and Non-co-operation was the poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam (b. 1899). When still a school student in his teens Nazrul joined the newly recruited Bengali Regiment (1916) and was sent to Mesopotamia some months before the armistice. The regiment was not given a chance to face battle but all the same Nazrul got his fill of the fighting gusto which later

found expression in poetic effusion and warmth. There was a Maulvi from the Panjab attached to the regiment who was a lover of Persian poetry. Nazrul read Hafiz with him and this was his real initiation in poetry. On return home (1918) he wrote some poems paraphrasing Hafiz. His first two significant poems, *Pralayollās* (Exhilaration at the Final Dissolution) and *Vidroha* (Rebellion) appeared early in 1922 and his first book of poems *Agnivīṇa* (The Lute of Fire) was out before the year was over. The book was received with an enthusiasm never experienced in our country before or since. Nazrul now joined the *Kallol* group and wrote mostly deft and pungent verse and songs galore. He produced more than twenty books of poetry and songs (mostly small ones) and some fiction and plays. Some of his later poems were good but the fire of *Agnivīṇā* was already quenched.

Nazrul was an emotional soul but his emotion was unstable and volatile. Those who came in personal contact with him were moved by his irresistible enthusiasm and sincerity. But his literary output falls far short of his merit, except the early poems in *Agnivīṇā*. The effusive personality of Nazrul imparted to these poems a liveliness which at once distinguished them from the writings of his contemporaries. His diction was invigorated by the effective use of Persian and Arabic words. Nazrul became interested in politics and later also in devotionalism, which was detrimental to his poetry. After *Agnivīṇā* his best known books of poems and songs are *Dolancāṁpā* (1923), *Biṣer Bāṁśi* (The Poisonous Flute, 1924), *Bhāṅgār Gān* (Songs of the Break-up, 1924), *Pūber Hāoyā* (The East Wind, 1925) and *Bulbul* (1928).

Mohitlal Majumdar (1888-1952) was a school teacher but his profession did not mean much to him. He joined the *Kallol* group with Kazi Nazrul Islam. But he had been already writing verse for some years. He was related to Devendranath Sen and started on his literary career as an admirer of Sen's poetry. Majumdar's first book of verse is *Devendra-maṅgal* (1912), a thin pamphlet, where he paid his

homage to the elder poet. In 1919 he joined the *Bhāratī* group and became a regular contributor to *Bhāratī*. His verse now followed the sonorous and tripping mode of Satyendranath Datta but the influence of Datta however he tried his best to outgrow. Nazrul's influence helped him to do so. His diction now indulged in Persian vocables and also in themes from Persian poetry. Majumdar's first significant book of poems *Svapan-pasārī* (A Dealer in Dreams, 1922) made him known as a poet of power and promise. His attitude to life and death was already emergent in one of its poems 'Aghorpanthi' (The Ghoulish Mendicant), first appearing in 1920. There is some touch of Omar Khayyam in it. When *Svapan-pasārī* came out Majumdar suddenly appeared to have lost enthusiasm for Tagore's poetry. This made his access to the *Kallol* group easy, although he was much older than the oldest of them.

Some of the characteristic poems included in his second book of poems *Vismaraṇī* (Disremembrance, 1929) were first published in *Kallol*. The poet now accepts life at its face value and he would enjoy it at any cost. There is only nihil for him beyond death. In the poem 'Mohamudgar' (A Cudgel against Self-deception) he puts a challenge to Tagore:

> Gazing with face uplifted at the white flowers of the night and contemplating on the vista of the nebulas, rejecting with a contemptuous laugh the streams of milk in the full breasts of the earth, contriving mirages for the hungry man and starving your own self here for a long, long time, O lord of the poets, how long will you continue to lull the mortal man by dispensing sleeping draught?

This attitude to life is modified in the poem 'Pāntha' (The Wayfarer) addressed to Schopenhauer 'the philosopher and sannyasi'. Here the poet would like a continuity of some sort of super-consciousness beyond death. This is not soul but the flow of a continuum, what in Buddhist philosophy

binds the five *skandhas*. Majumdar produced two other books of poems: *Smaragaral* (The Poison of Desire, 1936) and *Hemanta-godhūli* (A Winter's Dusk, 1941). *Chanda-caturdaśī* (1944), a book of sonnets, is a posthumous publication. After he had joined the Dacca University as a lecturer in Bengali, Majumdar quickly disaffiliated himself from the 'progressive' school whose main centre of activity was shifting over to the one-time capital of East Bengal. But he turned back not towards Tagore but past him to the nineteenth century masters Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chatterji. He now wrote a number of critical essays, later collected into books such as *Ādhunik Bāṅglā Sāhitya* (1936), *Sāhitya-kathā* (1938), *Sāhitya-vitān* (1942), etc.

Majumdar was a careful and patient writer of verse and he was meticulous in his diction. This is one of the reasons why he wrote sparsely.

Jatindranath Sengupta (1887-1954) was a graduate in engineering and was employed as an inspecting engineer in the district of Murshidabad. He was writing verse from 1910, if not earlier, but his first book of poems was not published before 1923. The first three books are *Marīcikā* (The Mirage, 1923), *Maruśikhā* (The Desert Flame, 1927) and *Marumāyā* (The Desert Illusion, 1930). These titles are indicative of his peculiar view of life. It is not an attitude of revolt nor of denial. He takes life as good on the whole but he cannot gloss over its disappointments, frustrations, failures and sufferings. Hence the characteristic note of his poetry is a mild but sarcastic protest. The temperamental difference between Sengupta and Majumdar is clearly noticeable in their poems entitled 'Duhkher Kavi' (The Poet of Misery). Majumdar's poem was written much later and is palpably a rejoinder to the other's. Sengupta says:

> She has resolved, I understand: If pure gold is not available I would go without ornaments but I will not

> delude myself with the fake! . . . Is worship and devotion done merely by touching the head at the holy feet as an act of atonement? To break away from the halter and run straight into the pen: is that salvation?

Majumdar thinks:

> If a man really feels happy in delusion and falsehood, if he makes out a cold plate of rice to be a hot dish, if a childless woman feels motherly and happy by adopting a stone image of child Krishna, who is there that does not feel tearfully thankful at her satisfaction? Who would like to hurt her by telling the hard truth?

After a long interval Sengupta published two more volumes of poetry: *Sāyam* (Evening, 1940) and *Triyāmā* (Night, 1948). *Niśāntikā* (End of the Night, 1957) is a posthumous collection. His only prose work *Kāvya-parimiti* (Calculus of Poetry, 1930) deals with poetics in general.

GOKULCHANDRA NAG (1895-1925), the joint founder of *Kallol,* was a student of the Government Art School but he left school before completing his course. He ran a flower stall in Calcutta. In his habit and character as well as in profession he was a lover of the artistic. He started the monthly *Kallol* with the help of Dinesranjan Das (1888-1941) in May 1923. Throughout the seven years of its existence the periodical remained the principal organ of the new 'progressive' movement in Bengali literature. *Bhāratī* was moribund when *Kallol* started, and *Sabujpatra* had been intermittent. The oldest and the youngest of the reputed magazines finally stopped publication before the year 1927 was over. After the death of Nag *Kallol* was run by Das.

Nag's earliest attempts were some storiettes after the manner of Tagore's *Lipikā.* These were published in *Pravāsī* and *Bhāratī* and elsewhere and were collected in the volume *Ruprekhā* (The Form and the Outline, 1922). Some

of his mature stories were collected in the posthumous volume *Māyāmukul* (Buds of Delusion, 1927). His best work, however, is the novel *Pathik* (Wayfarer, 1925), serialized in *Kallol* from its first issue. There is not much of a connected story here but the glimpses of life it seeks to catch and the author's easy and mindful style makes it the first production of a new mode of fiction and a readable book.

Das had written some short stories five of which were published in the volumes *Māṭir Neśa* (Addiction to Earth, 1918) and *Bhuiṁ-cāṁpā* (1925). Das was a good amateur play-actor and was interested in the stage. After the discontinuance of the periodical he turned to the cinema for a profession.

Sri Manindralal Basu (b. 1897) is less lyrical and he leans definitely towards the romanticism of the *Bhāratī* group. His first novel *Ramalā* (1923) is a romantic love-story of a comfortably placed social set. It influenced some of the young writers of fiction. Basu began his literary career as a writer of short stories which won him recognition. He has published several volumes of short stories: *Māyāpurī* (The Fairy City, 1923), *Raktakamal* (The Red Lily, 1924), *Sonār Harin* (The Golden Deer, 1924), *Kalpalatā* (The Wish Creeper, 1935), *Sahayātriṇī* (The Lady Fellow Traveller, 1941), etc. His other novels are *Ajaykumār* (1932) and *Jīvanāyan* (The Saga of Life, 1936).

SRI SAILAJANANDA MUKHERJI (b. 1900) was Kazi Nazrul Islam's school-fellow and chum in a mining town in West Bengal. Mukherji too ran away from home with his friend, intending to join the Bengali regiment. But he was found out by his guardians in Calcutta and taken back home. After the return of Nazrul from Mesopotamia Mukherji resumed with his friend his interrupted literary venture. In their school days Mukherji was inclined to write verse while Nazrul was interested in writing stories in prose. But now their interests were reversed. Mukherji began writing

short stories while Nazrul started writing poetry, and these early attempts of theirs were published in *Vaṅgīya Musalmān Sāhitya Patrikā* (1921). Mukherji's early stories were collected in a book entitled *Āmer Mañjarī* (Mango Blossoms, 1923). Two of the stories give a good glimpse of Muslim family life. Two long stories or novelettes followed (*Hāsi* and *Lakṣmī*) immediately, and these stories are to some extent based on the author's early experiences in Calcutta. These experiences, however, were used forcefully and poignantly in some of his later stories like *Dhvaṃsapather Yātrī Erā* (Travellers on the Way to Death Are They).

Mukherji's first real appearance before the knowledgeable reader was with his short stories depicting the life of the local labour in the coal fields near about his home town. The first of these are *Raising Report* published in *Pravāsī* (March 1923), *Balidān* (The Sacrifice) in the same journal (April 1923), *Mā* (Mother) in *Kallol* (April 1923) and *Nārīr Man* also in *Kallol* (May 1923). Such stories continued in *Kallol, Pravāsī, Vaṅgavāṇī* and *Bijalī* up to the end of 1925. Collected in the volumes *Kaylākuṭhi* (The Coal-mine Office, 1930) and *Din-majur* (A Day Labourer, 1932) these stories make a landmark in Bengali literature not only for vivid realism and grim tragedy but also for introducing for the first time the vogue of the regional fiction. Mukherji's subsequent stories maintained the standard. The plots are taken from personal experience or immediate knowledge and they are transcribed faithfully without any emotive imposition. The ambition of an author anxious to cut a figure did nowhere stand between the plot and its execution. The short and long stories compiled in the volumes *Atasī* (1925), *Nārīmedh* (The Woman Sacrifice, 1928), *Vadhū-varaṇ* (Welcome to the Bride, 1931), *Pauṣ Pārvaṇ* (Winter Festival, 1931), *Satī-asatī* (The Chaste and Unchaste Girl, 1933), *Nārījanma* (A Woman's Life, 1934), etc. contain some of the best stories that Mukherji has written. His novels, or rather novelettes, such as *Māṭir Ghar* (1923), *Jhaḍo Hāoyā* (Gusty

Wind, 1923), *Joyār-bhāṭā* (The Tides, 1924), *Anāhuta* (Uninvited, 1931) *Anivārya* (Irresistible, 1931), etc. are rather weak. But *Ṣola-ānā* (The Full Complement, 1925) is an exception. It is not a novel in the ordinary sense; it depicts village life in West Bengal centred round the annual festival of the village deity, a life that is real and sordid but neither glossed over nor exaggerated.

As a writer of the realistic short story Jagadis Chandra Gupta (1886-1957) is popularly associated with Sri Sailajananda Mukherji. Both writers write straight from life and experience but while Mukherji's stories are strictly impersonal and faintly emotive Gupta delivers them raw and slightly tinctured with mockery. Gupta started his literary career by writing verse after Govindachandra Das; some of these were collected in the volume *Akṣarā.* He had never given up writing verse but these were no longer lyrical poems. Gupta's first short story 'Paying Guest' and the next were first published in *Bijalī* (1925). The next stories came out in *Kāli-Kalam* (1926), *Kallol* and *Vaṅgavāṇī.* The first volume of his most characteristic short stories is *Vinodinī* (1928). He produced eight or nine more volumes of short stories, such as *Rūper Bāhire* (Beyond Beauty, 1929), *Śrīmatī* (1930), *Gatihārā Jāhnavī* (The Unflowing Ganga, 1935), *Śaśāṅka Kavirājer Strī* (Sasanka Kaviraj's Wife, 1935), *Pāik Śrī Mihir Prāmāṇik* (Mihir Pramanik the Bailiff, 1940), *Meghāvṛta Aśani* (Thunder Screened by Cloud, 1947), etc. He produced also a dozen of long stories or short novels, e.g. *Asādhu Siddhārtha* (Dishonest Siddhartha, 1929), *Mahiṣī* (1929), *Dulāler Dolā* (Dulāl's Dilemma, 1931), *Romanthan* (Cud-chewing, 1931), etc. The short stories of Gupta are grimly realistic, often pathologically cruel. The psychosis of the abnormal is followed in some of them and they are pervaded by a terrific fatalism somewhat like that of Greek tragedies. The plots of his long stories or short novels are not fit for such treatment and are more or less propagandistic and the author was not always unaware of it. So he says

in the preface of *Dulāler Dolā* that he would not be surprised if these works are not judged as fiction but as essays.

Bibhutibhushan Banerji (1899-1950) had been writing short stories which appeared in *Pravāsī* since 1922 but they did not attract much notice before the publication of his first novel *Pather Pāṁcālī* (A Pedestrian's Rhymes, 1929) in the pages of the newly started magazine *Vichitrā*, with Sri Upendranath Ganguli (b. 1881), a member of the old Bhagalpur group and author of the novel *Rājpath* (1925) and other novels and short stories, as the editor. This masterpiece of Banerji and its sequel *Aparājita* (1932), based on the author's own life-story, are written with a rare sincerity and fulness of heart that never fail to strike a note of nostalgic sympathy in the emotional reader. But some of the stories that Banerji had written earlier show him at his best. Among these may be mentioned 'Umārāṇī' (first published 1922) and 'Pui-mācā' (The Kitchen Garden Scaffolding; first published 1925). These and his later short stories are collected in more than a dozen volumes, such as *Meghmallār* (1931), *Maurīphul* (1932), *Jātrā Badal* (1934), etc. Banerji's novels are not a few and they include besides those already mentioned: *Dṛṣṭipradīp* (The Look—a Lamp, 1935), *Āraṇyak* (The Wild, 1938), *Ādarśa Hindu Hotel* (1940), *Bipiner Saṃsār* (Bipin's Home, 1941), *Devayān* (Spirit's Path, 1944), *Icchāmatī* (1949), etc. Banerji was a lover of the flora. He liked the hilly and wild land and this love is fully reflected in *Āraṇyak*. He was romantic and lyrical by temperament and had a definite bias towards the occult and the spiritual. This is noticeable in some of his later novels.

Sri Bibhutibhushan Mukherji (b. 1896) had one of his earliest stories published in *Pravāsī* in 1923. Since then his short stories have been published in various journals and these have been collected in several volumes, such as *Rāṇur Pratham Bhāg* (Rāṇu's First Spelling Book, 1937), *Rāṇur Dvitīya Bhāg* (Rāṇu's Second Book of Reading, 1938), *Rāṇur Kathāmālā* (Rāṇu's Storybook, 1941), *Hate Khaḍi* (Initiation

in Writing, 1947), etc. Mukherji has written also some novels and plays. His short stories are written in a light and jocose vein, and are quite popular.

The short story of a very short size not belonging to the lyrical or 'prose poem' variety but showing snapshots of real life on the surface, was cultivated successfully by Rabindranath Maitra (1896-1933) who during his life-time was generally known by his pen-name 'Divākar śarmā'. His first and one of his best short stories 'Third Class', giving a glimpse of a railway journey in a crowded third class compartment, was published in *Bijalī* (1925). His short-stories are collected in seven books: *Third Class* (1928), *Vāstavikā* (Bits of Reality, 1931), *Udāsīr Māṭh* (1931), *Divākarī* (1931), *Trilocan Kavirāj* (1933), etc. His comic play *Mānmayī Girl's School* (1932) is still popular on the amateur stage.

KEDARNATH BANERJI (1863-1949) was a contributor to *Bālak* of Tagore (1885) but he discontinued writing for more than two decades. He was in Government service and was posted in various places in Upper India. He was sent to China and this travel produced the essays that were first published as letters from a sojourner in China in *Bhāratī* (1903-04) and much later as a book entitled *Cinyātrī* (1918). His first book, however, is a humorous poem on life in general in Banaras: *Kāśīr Kiñcit* (A Wee Bit of Kashi, 1915). As a writer of short stories Banerji first appeared in *Kāli-Kalam* (1926) with the story 'Kabluti'. Later he became a regular contributor to *Bhāratvarṣa*. Banerji wrote stories and novels in a light-hearted manner which made him popular with the general reader. His style is based on the Calcutta *patois* of the past generation but notwithstanding such mannerism it is smooth and enjoyable. His novels are more or less long-drawn series of pleasant talks and back-chats. To mention some: *Koṣṭhīr Phalāphal* (Result of Horoscope Reading, 1929), *Bhāduḍī Maśāi* (Mr. Bhaduri, 1931), *I Has* (1935), etc. His stories are of much more abid-

ing value. They are collected in several books, such as *Āmrā Ki O Ke* (What and Who Are We, 1927), *Kabluti* (Agreement, 1928), *Pātheya* (Traveller's Purse, 1930), *Duḥkher Deoyāli* (Floodlight of Misery, 1932), etc.

Sri Rajshekhar Basu (b. 1880) is one of the best writers of the humorous story in Bengali and he may be compared to the English writer Jerome K. Jerome. Basu's stories are illustrated by pen and ink sketches by Sri Jatindrakumar Sen. Sen's pen and ink drawings and silhouettes were an attractive feature in *Mānasī O Marmavāṇī* edited by Prabhatkumar Mukherji. It was these drawings of Sen that somehow induced Basu to write his short stories. The first few were published in *Bhāratvarṣa,* and as soon as the first story 'Viriñci Bābā' (The Reverend Viriñci) was out the success of the unnamed author was assured. The successive stories (all published in his pseudonym 'Paraśurām') enhanced his reputation, and he is now regarded as one of the best writers in the language. Basu ridicules all that is sham and frivolous in our middle class society but the ridicule hurts nobody, amuses all. Basu has published several volumes of humorous stories, such as *Gaḍḍalikā* (Sheep-flock on the Move, 1924), *Kajjalī* (Lamp-black, 1927), *Hanumāner Svapna* (The Monkey's Dream, 1937), *Kṛṣṇakali* (1953), etc. Basu has also written some thoughtful essays which are collected in *Laghuguru* (Light and Heavy, 1939), *Bicintā* (Various Thoughts, 1956), etc.

SRI PRABODHKUMAR SANNYAL (b. 1907) published one of his first stories in *Kallol* (1924). In a few months he emerged as one of the major contributors of short stories to *Kāli-Kalam* (1926) started by Sri Sailajananda Mukherji, Sri Premendra Mitra and Sri Muralidhar Basu. These short stories or sketches were collected in the book entitled *Niśipadma* (Lotus at Night, 1931) but his first book was the novel *Jājāvar* (The Nomad, 1928). It was followed by *Kājallatā* (1931), *Kalarav* (Loud Talking, 1932), etc. Sannyal is spe-

cially happy in his books on travel; among these *Mahāprasthāner Pathe* (On the Road to the Great Departure, 1933) is worth mention. Sannyal writes in a neat and smooth style which has its own appeal. In his stories and novels he appears as an impassive observer who would miss nothing.

Sri Premendra Mitra, Sri Achintyakumar Sengupta and Sri Buddhadev Basu at the first stage of their literary career formed a trio that was made notorious by the detractors of the new 'progressive' school. There is one trait common among them: they showed equal facility in writing prose and verse when they started, and with the exception of Sengupta they have continued to do so with still better facility. The trio also had collaborated to produce two novels.

Sri Premendra Mitra (b. 1904) was a member of the editorial board of *Kāli-Kalam* for two years (1926-28), and in this journal some of his best known poems and short stories were published. Before this he had been contributing to *Pravāsī*, but mainly to the weekly *Bijalī* and later also to *Pragati* edited by Sri Ajit Datta and Sri Buddhadev Basu and published from Dacca. His earliest work *Pāṁk* (Muck, 1927), a novelette describing the seamy side of the home-life of the slum-dwellers in Calcutta, was serialized in *Bijalī* (1925) and continued in *Kāli-Kalam* (1926). *Pāṁk* fetched him notoriety but the subsequent publications brought him just repute. His short stories are compiled in several books, such as *Pañcaśar* (The God with Five Arrows, 1929), *Benāmi Bandar* (The Anonymous Port, 1930), *Mṛttikā* (The Soil, 1932), etc.

Mitra is better known as a poet and justly so. From the very start his poems showed an unostentatiousness and a maturity denied to most of his contemporaries. Miseries and failures in life, specially of the unfortunate and the deprived who toil without adequate recompense for the well-being of the rich and the fortunate, moved him profoundly but he is never malicious, angry, or loud in his

censure. Unlike some of his colleagues, sex was not an overriding consideration with him. It was really *joie de vivre* more than anything else that impelled the heart of the poet to feel as one of the millions that toiled ignominiously. So he says in the poem *Pāṁodal* (The Bands that Trudge, first published 1925):

> Who goes there that cannot use his legs by always riding in palanquins? Come you, and walk in step with them whose feet are naked and strong.
> Who goes there that steps on the heads of men and so makes their feet feel heavy with the load of sin? Come you, and drop the load in the dust of the road.

This love-for-the-labourer phase passed presently and Mitra's verse became placidly lyrical and pervaded with a dreamy vision of the beauty of nature geographically unconfined.

Mitra has produced up to now four rather small volumes of poetry: *Prathamā* (The First Girl, 1932), *Samrāṭ* (The Emperor, 1940), *Pherāri Phauj* (The Runaway Army, 1948) and *Sāgar Theke Pherā* (Return from the Sea, 1956). His only book of essays is *Vṛṣṭi Elo* (The Rains are Come, 1954). Mitra has written also stories for children.

Sri Achintyakumar Sengupta (b. 1903) was more felicitous in verse than in prose. His first significant poem *Amāvasyā* (New Moon, 1930) is an enjoyable piece, smooth and impassioned, occasionally reminding the reader of Kazi Nazrul Islam. He has produced three more books of verse: *Āmrā* (We, 1933), *Priyā O Pṛthivī* (The Beloved and the Earth, 1936) and *Nīl Ākāś* (The Blue Sky, 1950). Sengupta's first novel (and book) *Bede* (The Nomad, 1928) is directly influenced by Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*. It was first serialized in *Kallol* (1926-1927), and was followed by a translation of Hamsun's *Pan* and by *Ṭuṭāphuṭā* (Broken and Leaking, 1929), a collection of six stories first published in different journals. Since then Sengupta has produced more than thirty volumes of novels and long stories and more than

twenty books of short stories. Among his novels the more important are: *Ākasmik* (Accidental, 1930), *Vivāher Ceye Baḍo* (Higher than Marriage, 1931), *Prācīr O Prāntar* (The Wall and the Distance, 1932), *Ūrṇānābh* (The Spider, 1933), *Indrāṇī* (1933), *Tumi Ār Ami* (You and I, 1934), etc. Of his books of short stories the following may be mentioned: *Iti* (1932), *Rudrer Āvirbhāv* (Appearance of Rudra, 1934), *Double Decker* (1938), *Jatan Bibi* (1944), *Kāṭh-Khaḍ-Kerosin* (Fuel, Straw and Kerosine, 1945), *Hāḍi Muci Ḍom* (1948), etc.

Like almost all his contemporaries Sengupta is more at home in the short story than in the novel. His earlier novels and stories were at one time not acceptable to the general reader, as he seemed heterodox in theme and execution. His style was often forced and far from happy. The common reader's reaction against the characteristic fiction of Sengupta and his school was so strong that the Government was moved (1933) to proscribe two of his novels *Vivāher Ceye Baḍo* and *Prācīr O Prāntar* and a book of short stories by Sri Buddhadev Basu (*Erā Orā Evaṃ Āro Aneke*) as obscene. The later stories are generally based on the author's rich experience of men and manners, as a judicial officer of the Government posted in several rural and urban towns in the province. In the latest phase of his literary career Sengupta has turned his attention to embellish devotional literature. His book on the life and teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhamsa was a best seller.

Sri Buddhadev Basu (b. 1908), before his appearance as an author, had come out as the co-editor of a periodical published from Dacca (where he had his education) which championed the efforts of the new 'progressive' group of young writers. This was *Pragati* made notorious by the vociferous opposing group. The periodical ran for two years and a few months. Basu, like Sri Premendra Mitra, was equally facile in prose and verse, although from the beginning his verse was more mature than his prose. (This was due to a deliberate

anglicism in his prose style.) In his early writings Basu shows his allegiance to D. H. Lawrence. His first book of verse *Marmavāṇī*, published from Dacca (1925), is a completely forgotten work. The next book *Bandīr Vandanā* (Homage of the Prisoner, 1930) contains eleven poems of gushing passionate love. In approach as well as in execution Basu in these poems tried to break away from tradition, and he tried his best to avoid rhyme. In spite of his best efforts to write unlike Tagore, he could not escape Tagore. Many of his books (stories and novels) have lines or phrases from Tagore as the titles. Some of the poems remind the reader constantly of Tagore's novel *Śeṣer Kavitā*. Awkwardness and adolescent effusiveness soon departed, however, from Basu's poetry to which maturity was not denied for long. Very good poetry is to be found in his later books of verse, such as *Pṛthivīr Pathe* (On the Road of the Earth, 1933), *Kaṅkāvatī* (1937), *Damayantī* (1943), *Draupadīr Śāḍī* (Draupadi's Sari, 1948), etc.

The prose works of Basu include novels, short stories and literary and personal essays, all showing evidence of meticulous penmanship. In fiction Basu is entirely introspective ; his heroes are always enmeshed in their own thoughts and conditioned by their creator's personality. There is not much of action nor is there much variety. This is why Basu's fiction generally seems anaemic in spite of the excellence of his narration. His first novel *Sāḍā* (Response, 1930) raised a *furore* in the opponents' camp, although there was nothing in it at which even a prudish reader might take offence. Among his other novels numbering about two score the following may be mentioned: *Akarmaṇya* (Worthless, 1931), *Āmār Bandhu* (My Friend, 1933), *Dhūsar Godhūli* (Fading Evening, 1933), *Yedin Phuṭla Kamal* (The Day the Lotus Opened, 1933), *Paraspar* (Mutually, 1934), *Kālo Hāoyā* (The Black Wind, 1942), *Tithiḍor* (1949), etc. In the short story Basu's success is indisputable. The introspective mood has not made his

stories slow moving but has, on the other hand, imparted a glow to them. They are collected in several books, such as *Rekhācitra* (Pictures in Outline, 1931), *Abhinay Abhinay Nay* (The Play-acting that is not Play-acting, 1930), *Erā Orā Evaṅ Āro Aneke* (These, Those and Many Others Too, 1932), *Mrs Gupta* (1934), *Gharete Bhramer Elo Guṇguṇiye* (A Bee Has Come Humming into the Room, 1935), *Pheriolā* (The Hawker, 1940), etc.

As a protagonist of the new school of writers Basu has always played the double role of the defender and the offending. As a nonchalant leader of the young writers who tried to ignore tradition in literature he was the main target of attack from the aggressive champions of the traditionalist camp. Basu and his friends did not retaliate by being merely abusive. They continued to move on their chosen path, but Basu did something more. First as the joint editor of *Pragati* and then the founder-editor of *Kavitā* (1935-), a quarterly devoted to the new poetry, he wrote essays and reviews which defended the new poetry with vigour and tenacity. It is not surprising that he carried the war to the enemy's camp ; the validity of the accepted judgement on the works of some of the old masters was seriously challenged by him. It cannot be denied that the acceptance of an idiosyncratic poet like Jivanananda Das was, to a large extent, due to the persistence of Basu. Such and other critical essays of Basu are compiled in the books: *Uttartiriś* (Above Thirty, 1945), *Kāler Putul* (Dolls of the Current Time, 1946) and *Sāhityacarcā* (Discussion on Literature, 1954). His other prose works include four volumes on travel and reminiscence: *Haṭhāt Ālor Jhalkāni* (A Sudden Splash of Light, 1935), *Āmi Cañcala He* (O, I Flutter, 1936), *Samudratīr* (The Sea Coast, 1937) and *Sab Peyechir Deś* (The All-found Land). Basu also writes for the young.

Sri Ajit Datta (b. 1907), the co-editor of *Pragati*, published his first book of verse *Kusumer Mās* (The Month of Flowers) in 1930, the year of publication of his collaborator's

Bandīr Vandanā. Since then he has published four more volumes: *Pātāl Kanyā* (The Girl in the Nether World, 1938), *Naṣṭacāṁd* (The Moon Not To Be Seen, 1945) and *Punarnavā* (Young Again, 1947). Datta has not written much in prose. *Janāntike* (Aside, 1949) is a delightful book of personal essays. So is *Man Pavaner Nāo* (The Boat Moved by the Breeze of the Mind, 1950) published under his pseudonym 'Raivat'.

Datta is essentially a poet. His poetry has that mellow, soft and soothing undertone that arises from subdued emotion. The diction of his poems is as smooth and simple as it can be, and untwisted and unhurried. There is no effort to take the reader by surprise.

JIVANANANDA DAS (1899-1954) is the most heterodox, not to say eccentric, among the poets of the new school and he is no doubt the most original. Das was brought up in Barisal where he had his school and early college education, and he finished his University education in Calcutta. His first efforts in versification were along the traditional path and his early poems follow the pattern of Satyendranath Datta and Kazi Nazrul Islam. These his early poems, published in different periodicals, were collected in a volume entitled *Jharā Pālak* (A Cast-off Feather, 1928). Some time before its publication he had been making experiments in the new poetry. After the publication of the book he saw that his was the new path and he devoted himself to it with single-mindedness. His poems, often violently new and raw, were ridiculed and caricatured by the opposite camp. This had a very adverse effect on the sensitive mind of the poet who was temperamentally introspective, shy and solitary. He was a junior lecturer in English at a Calcutta college when the ill-natured caricature of his poetry brought him into the disfavour of the college authorities and he lost his job. He joined a Delhi college for a year and after a long spell of unemployment went back to his home town as a college

teacher and lived there until 1948 when he was forced by the political situation to leave East Pakistan and come back to Calcutta. At the time of his death he was a lecturer at a suburban college.

The cause of Das's sudden and determined change over to the new poetry is not known. But it can be safely guessed that it was induced by Ezra Pound's and T. S. Eliot's poetry which was just then becoming the vogue in the English-speaking world. According to Eliot and the Imagists a creative artist should not seek the known and easy way for the process of artistic creation, such as poetry; it must call for a strenuous act of imagination on the part of the writer as well as of the reader; and therefore in the new poetry the language is bound to be symbolic and the expression cryptic. They also hold that modern poetry is concerned with the entire field of human knowledge, historical and scientific, and even with subconscious and illogical cogitation. They believe that a notation of snap impressions and clipped images can invoke the intended effect, that is, imparting the poet's feeling and mood to the mind of the reader, more exactly than do the figures of speech, rhyme and rhythm and all the other time-worn devices of poets who are now only word-mongers. Das accepted these principles and wrote his poems accordingly. Many of the seventeen poems of his first significant book *Dhūsar Pāṇḍulipi* (The Faded Manuscript, 1936) were first published in *Pragati* (1927-30); the rest in *Kallol* and other periodicals. His other books of poetry are: *Banalatā Sen* (1942, enlarged 1952), *Mahāpṛthivī* (The Great Earth, 1944) and *Sātṭi Tārār Timir* (Darkness from the Seven Stars, 1948). His *Śreṣṭha Kavitā* (The Best Poems, 1954) is a selection that contains also some poems not included in the other volumes. Das latterly attempted to write prose also, but with the exception of one or two, his literary and critical essays were left as drafts and the author did not get time to give them a final shape. These are now published in book form: *Kavitār Kathā* (Discourse on Poetry,

1956). In these essays Das has tried to defend the new Bengali poetry. Assessing the new school of poets *vis-à-vis* Tagore, Das opines:

> The post-Tagore period started from the publication of *Kallol*. . . . Here there is no single Rabindranath but there are some poets present here who do away with the necessity of a second Rabindranath.

The following quotation (in translation) from the poem *Hāy Cil* would illustrate the poetry of Jivanananda Das:

> Alas, kite, O kite of golden wings, in this mid-day of wet clouds, don't you cry, flying and flying over by the Dhānsiri river. The notes of your cry remind me of her dull eyes like berries of the cane; like the fair princess of the world she and her beauty passed out far away; why do you call her back again? Who, alas, would dig into his heart and would like to stir up pain! Alas, kite, O kite of golden wings, in this mid-day of wet clouds, don't you cry, flying over by the Dhānsiri river.

Sri Bishnu De (b. 1909) also is a college lecturer in English, and he too made his *début* in *Pragati*. His books of verse number half a dozen. They are: *Ūrvaśī O Artemis* (1933), *Corābāli* (Quicksand, 1937), *Pūrvalekh* (Early Writing, 1941), *Sandvīper Car* (Reclaimed Land in Sandvip, 1947), *Anviṣṭa* (The Desired, 1950) and *Nām Rekhechi Komal Gāndhār* (I have named her Flat Gāndhār, 1953). The last title is taken from Tagore. De is a painstaking writer and in some of his early poems he deliberately attempted, after Eliot, to introduce unfamiliar and learned allusions to classical European literature, as the title of his first book of poetry indicates. He avoids smoothness and makes his poetry uneven and gritty by injecting unfamiliar references and lexical words. De follows, to some extent, Eliot in making his poetry not intelligible to the man of average education.

He writes prose also but sparingly, and he has produced two books of essays: *Ruci O Pragati* (Taste and Progress) and *Sāhityer Bhaviṣyat* (The Future of Literature, 1952). He has translated some poems of Eliot.

Pragati was discontinued in its third year and *Kallol* was almost dead when *Paricay* (Acquaintance) was started in 1931 by Sri Sudhindranath Datta (b. 1901). It seemed to be a reappearance of *Sabujpatra* in the new set up. *Paricay* aimed at furtherance of the new tendencies in literature by introducing the current literary thoughts and productions of the West and attempted to modify the truculent attitude of the new school of writers towards the old. Datta had published a book of verse in 1929 or thereabout which is long out of circulation. His first significant poem 'Orchestra' appeared in *Paricay* (1932). Since then Datta has published four books of poems: *Orchestra* (1935), *Krandasī* (1937), *Uttaraphalgunī* (1940) and *Saṃvarta* (1953). His literary essays are included in the volume *Svagata* (To Oneself, 1948). Datta would not liquidize his verse by following the trodden paths of smooth poetry; he would often use such words as are not to be found outside Sanskrit lexicons. Datta's poetry is difficult but not in the same way as De's. Datta is equally difficult in his prose.

Sri Samar Sen (b. 1916), the youngest writer of the new school of poetry, succeeded in catching something of the dispassionate and somewhat pessimistic view of the lower middle-class life of the city. His attitude is satirical, and his cynicism a little precocious. Sen's poems are collected in four small books: *Kayekṭi Kavitā* (A Few Poems, 1937), *Grahaṇ* (1940), *Nānā Kathā* (1942), and *Tinpuruṣ* (Three Generations, 1944).

Mr. Humayun Kabir (b. 1904) is the author of two popular books of poems: *Svapnasādh* (Dream Desire, 1927) and *Sāthī* (Companion, 1932). Mr. Kabir has made his name as a scholar, educator and administrator but has kept up his

touch with literature. He is the editor of the quarterly *Caturaṅga* (Four Arts, 1939) which has succeeded in keeping up a high standard all these years.

Sri Annadashankar Ray (b. 1904) was educated in Orissa and Bihar. He knows Oriya as well as his mother-tongue and has produced some verse and prose in the language. Ray writes both prose and poetry but prose is his *forté*. His books of verse include: *Rākhī* (The Wristband, 1929), *Ekṭi Vasanta* (One Spring, 1932), *Kāler Śāśan* (The Rule of Time, 1933) and *Kāmanā Pañcaviṃśati* (Twenty-five Desires, 1934). *Uḍki Dhāner Muḍki* (Sweetened Parched Rice from Urki Paddy, 1942) is a book of rhymes, clerihews, poems and ballads. Ray has written several books of essays, literary, biographical and personal. These are: *Tāruṇya* (Youth, 1928), *Āmrā* (We, 1937), *Jīvanśilpī* (The Artist of Life, 1941), *Iśārā* (A Hint, 1943), *Binur Bai* (Binu's Book, 1944), *Jīvankāṭhi* (The Wand of Life, 1949), *Pratyay* (Assurance, 1951), etc. *Pathe Pravāse* (On the Way and in Sojourn, 1931) describes the author's travels in Europe when he was there undergoing training as an Indian Civil Servant. First serialized in *Vicitrā,* it made a name for the author who was till then quite unknown. *Europer Ciṭhi* (Letters from Europe, 1943) is a similar work written for the young.

Ray has written short stories and novels. The short stories are to be found in *Prakṛtir Parihās* (Nature's Irony, 1934), *Man Pavan* (Mind the Breeze, 1946), *Jauvanjvālā* (Torture of Youthfulness, 1950) and *Kāminīkāñcan* (Woman and Wealth, 1954). Six of his novels form a hexad, carrying the story through, entitled *Satyāsatya* (Truth and Untruth). It comprises *Yār Yethā Deś* (Where One Really Belongs, 1932), *Ajñātavās* (Living Incognito, 1933), *Kalaṅkavatī* (The Maligned Woman, 1934), *Duḥkhamocan* (Relief from Distress, 1936), *Marter Svarga* (Heaven on Earth, 1940) and *Apasaraṇ* (Exeunt, 1942). Other novels are *Āgun Niye Khelā* (Playing with Fire, 1930), *Asamāpikā* (Non-finite,

1931), *Putul Niye Khelā* (Playing with Dolls, 1933), *Nā* (No, 1951), *Kanyā* (The Girl, 1953), etc.

A GROUP of fiction writers emerged in the pages of *Vaṅgaśrī* (Beauty of Bengal) under the editorship of Sri Sajani Kanta Das (b. 1900). Das has written a few good poems, some clever parodies in verse and caricatures and humorous sketches in prose. These are to be found in the volumes *Path Calte Ghāser Phul* (The Weeds Flower as One Walks, 1929), *Anguṣṭha* (The Thumb, 1931), *Madhu O Hul* (Honey and Sting, 1931), *Kalikāl* (The Kali Age, 1940), etc. He wrote a novel, *Ajay* (1931), and its story shows that for the time being at least the author was affiliated to the progressive school which was later the main target of his satire. Das has produced also some volumes of verse; e.g. *Rājhaṃsa* (The Swan, 1935), *Ālo Āṁdhāri* (The Twilight, 1936), *Paṁciśe Baiśākh* (The Twenty-fifth of Baiśākh, 1942), etc.

Sri Sarojkumar Raychaudhuri (b. 1902) and Sri Tarashankar Banerji (b. 1898) had made their first appearance in *Kallol*. But their continued efforts started in *Vaṅgaśrī* (1933). Raychaudhuri is the author of some readable books, short stories and novels, such as *Bandhanī* (The Tie, 1931), *Śṛṅkhal* (The Fetters, 1932), *Ākāś O Mṛttikā* (The Sky and the Earth, 1933), *Mayūrākṣī* (1936), *Haṃsavalākā* (Flying Swans, 1937), *Somlatā* (1938), *Kālo Ghoḍā* (The Black Horse, 1946), etc.

Tarashankar Banerji is a prolific writer of short stories and novels. With the solitary exception of 'Rāikamal'—later (1935) enlarged into a novelette—the best of his early stories were published in *Vaṅgaṣrī* and in *Pravāsī*. These stories are collected in the following books: *Chalanāmayī* (The Deceiving Woman, 1936), *Jalsāghar* (The Club Room, 1937), *Rasakali* (1938), *Prasādmālā* (The Garland as Gift, 1945), etc. Banerji has produced more than a score of novels including the following: *Caitālī Ghūrṇi* (A Summer Whirlwind, 1929), *Nīlkaṇṭha* (1930), *Āgun* (Fire, 1937), *Dhātrī Devatā* (The Nursing Deity, 1939), *Kālindī* (1940), *Kavi* (The Village

Rhymster, 1941), *Gaṇadevatā* (God the People, 1942), *Pañcagrām* (The Five Villages, 1943), *Hāṁsuli Bāṁker Upakathā* (The Legend of Hāṁsuli Bend, 1947), *Ārogya Niketan* (House of Convalescence, 1952), *Nāginī Kanyār Kāhinī* (The Story of the Serpent Girl, 1952), etc. Banerji is happiest in his regional stories and novels. He knows quite well the men and the nature of the part of the country he belongs to (Birbhum District in West Bengal), and his stories are always interesting. Banerji has written so far two volumes of autobiography and reminiscences: *Āmār Kāler Kathā* (The Tales of My Time, 1951) and *Āmār Sahitya Jīvan* (My Literary Life, 1953).

Sri Balaicand Mukherji (b. 1899) had been writing verse long before he took a medical graduate's degree, and from the beginning of his literary ventures he has been using the pseudonym Banaphul, that is 'a wild flower'. Mukherji belongs to Bhagalpur. He has written some enjoyable humorous poems and parodies which are to be found in *Banaphuler Kavitā* (Poems by Banaphul, 1936). His other books of verse are *Aṅgāraparṇī* (1940), *Āhavanīya* (Holy Fire, 1943), etc. Some of his short stories are very good, especially those that are drawn from his own experience first as a medical student and then as a pathologist. But his success is unique in very short stories (what is known as short-shorts in American literary slang). His books of short stories (and very short short stories) are: *Banaphuler Galpa* (Stories by Banaphul, 1936), *Baitaraṇītīre* (On the Bank of the Styx, 1937), *Bāhulya* (Redundant, 1943), *Adṛśyaloke* (In the Unseen World), etc. Mukherji's technical education has given a distinction to the themes and treatment of his novels. He is interested in human behaviour not simply as an artist but also as a man of science. His characteristic novels are *Tṛṇakhaṇḍa* (A Bit of Straw, 1935), *Kichukṣan* (Some Moments, 1937), *Dvairath* (A Duel, 1937), *Nirmok* (The Slough, 1940), *Jaṅgam* (On the Move, vol. i 1943) in three volumes, *Sthāvar* (The Fixed, 1951), *Ḍānā* (Wing, 1948), *Pañcaparva* (Five Stages, 1954),

etc. Mukherji has written some good biographical plays. His *Śrīmadhusūdan* (1939) and *Vidyāsāgar* (1941) have started the vogue of such plays in Bengali.

Manik Banerji (1908-1956) made his first appearance in *Vaṅgaśrī* with his *Divārātrir Kāvya* (A Poem of the Day and the Night) published as a book in 1935 and followed by *Putul Nācer Itikathā* (The Chronicles of a Puppet Dance, 1936). These two novels attracted attention and the author was greeted as an original writer who has his own angle of vision and direction of approach. His short and long stories which appeared subsequently show him to be a keen observer of the inner and outer life of the common man in rural setting. But in his later stories and novels the psychologist and the propagandist in him have often come out to the detriment of literature. The best known novels and books of short stories by Banerji, besides those already mentioned, are the following: *Jananī* (Mother, 1935), *Atasī Māmī* (Aunt Atasi, 1935), *Padmānadīr Mājhi* (The Boatman of the River Padma, 1936), *Prāgaitihāsik* (Pre-historical, 1937), *Mihi O Moṭā Kahini* (Stories Thin and Thick, 1938), *Sahartalī* (The Suburb ; two vols., 1940-41), *Haludpoḍā* (Burnt Turmeric, 1945), *Catuṣkoṇ* (Four-square, 1948), *Sonār Ceye Dāmī* (More Precious than Gold ; two vols., 1951-52), *Haraph* (Type, 1954), *Halud Nadī Sabuj Ban* (The Yellow River and the Green Forest, 1956), etc.

Sri Pramathanath Bisi (b. 1901) had his school and college education at Santiniketan and he is the only writer among us who had the best opportunities of imbibing the spirit and atmosphere of Tagore in its *nidus*. Bisi's first good poems are some sonnets (a few of which were first published in *Vaṅgaśrī*) incorporated in three small volumes: *Prācīn Āsāmī Haite* (From Old Assamese, 1934), *Vidyāsundar* (1934) and *Prācīn Gītikā Haite* (From Old Ballads, 1937), now all out of circulation. Bisi's later poems, showing a rare sensibility and warmth, are to be found in *Akuntalā* (1946),

Juktaveṇī (The United Streams, 1948), *Uttar Megh* (The Upper Cloud, 1953), etc. Bisi has written some long stories and novels, such as *Padmā* (1935), *Joḍādhīghīr Caudhurī-parivār* (The Caudhuri Family of Joḍadīghī, 1937?), *Calanbil* (1949), etc. He is more prolific in short stories written generally in a light vein. The more important of his books of short stories are *Śrīkānter Pañcam Parva* (The Fifth Series of Srikanta, 1939), *Aśarīrī* (Unbodied), *Galper Mata* (Like Stories, 1945), *Ḍākinī* (The Witch, 1945), *Brahmār Hāsi* (Brahma's Laugh, 1948), etc. Bisi is no less well known for his comic plays such as *Ṛṇaṃ Kṛtvā* (By Borrowing, 1935), *Ghṛtaṃ Pibet* (Should Eat Ghee, 1936), *Maucāke Ḍhil* (A Stone Thrown into a Honeycomb, 1948) and *Parihāsavijal-pitam* (Spoken in Jest), etc. which are popular on the amateur stage.

Bisi is a popular writer of prose and his style is distinguished by flashes of wit and humour, occasionally reminding the reader of Pramatha Chaudhuri. He has produced several volumes of critical studies in Tagore. One of his best books is *Ravīndranāth O Śāntiniketan* (1944) based on the reminiscences of his student life.

Sri Amiya Chakravarti (b. 1901) had lived for a long time at Santiniketan, and as Tagore's secretary had been in close contact with the master. Unlike his contemporaries, Chakravarti has written poems only and he has seven books to his credit: *Khasḍā* (First Draft, 1938), *Ekmuṭho* (Just a Handful, 1939), *Pārāpār* (Over and Back, 1953), *Pālābadal* (Change of Duty, 1955), etc. Chakravarti's poetry is his own, and it occasionally reveals a strange affinity with Tagore's poetry. The following quotation (in translation) from the poem *Eroplene* (In an Aeroplane) is an illustration:

> A moment of life is a great treasure; in the midst of the vast and vacant time it is a speck of illusion at the shadeless, steely horizon. In layer after layer colour spreads from end to end of the moment—I call it the

> exclusive time of being alive ; below it are trees and streams—dear ones move at the moment ;—in shops, in colleges, in trains what life at that moment implies I know nothing of ;—only at that moment I feel alive in Thy universe.

The short compass of this history does not allow for the inclusion of writers who have made their mark after 1941, the year that marks Tagore's death as well as approach of the second World War. It has also not been possible to take into account many writers who have produced good and popular works but did not chalk out any new path or create any new form. The essence of literature, as of beauty, lies in its perpetual freshness or *lāvaṇya* (literally, 'salinity') as it is called in our ancient language.

APPENDIX

Text of the Passages Quoted in Translation

Page 12

Dhaniyo: pakkodano duddhakhīro ham asmi
anutīre mahiyā samānavāso
channā kuṭi āhito gīni
atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.
Bhagavā: akkodhano vīgatakhilo ham asmi
anutīre mahiy' ekaratti vāso
vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini
atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.
Suttanipāta ('Dhaniya-sutta' 1-2).

Page 13

śutanukā nama devadaśikyi
taṃ kamayitha balana śeye
devadine nama lupadakhe.
Jogimara Cave Inscription (*Archaelogical Survey of India Annual Report, 1903-04*).

Page 14

diahā janti jhaḍappaḍahiṃ paḍahiṃ manoraha pacchi
jaṃ acchasi taṃ māniai hosai kara tu ma acchi.

jai keṃva-i pāvīsu piu akiā kuḍḍa karīsu
pāṇiuṃ navi sarāvi jiṃva savvaṅgeṃ paisīsu.
Siddha-hema-śabdānuśāsana (Adhyāya viii).
so mahu kantā
dūra digantā
pāusa āve
ceu calāve.
navi mañjari lijjia cūai gācche
pariphullia kesu-laā vaṇa āche.

jai itthi digantara jāiha kantā
kimu bammaha ṇatthi ki ṇatthi vasantā.

Prākṛta-paiṅgala.

Page 17

yadi Hari-smaraṇe sarasaṃ mano
yadi vilāsakalāsu kutūhalaṃ
madhura-komala-kānta-padāvalīṃ
śṛṇu tadā Jayadeva-sarasvatīm.

Gītogovinda (Canto i).

Page 32

cia sahaje śūṇa saṃpunnā
kāndha-viyoe mā hohi visannā
bhana kaise kāhṇu nāhi
pharai anudinaṃ tailoe pamāi
mūḍhā diṭha nāṭha dekhi kāara
bhāṅga-taraṅga ki sosai sāara
mūḍhā acchante loa na pekhai
dudha mājheṃ laṛa cchanteṃ ṇa dekhai
bhava jāi ṇa āvai esu koi
āisa bhāve vilasai Kāhnila joi.

Caryāgīti-padāvalī (42).

Page 33

tini bhuaṇa mai bāhia heleṃ
hāuṃ suteli mahāsuha-līḍeṃ
kaisaṇi hālo Ḍombī tohori bhābhariālī
ante kuliṇa-jaṇa mājheṃ kāvālī
taiṃ lo Ḍombī saala biṭaliu
kāja ṇa kāraṇa sasahara ṭāliu
keho keho tohore biruā bolai
bidujaṇa loa toreṃ kaṇṭha na melaī
Kāhne gāiu kāmacaṇḍālī
Ḍombita āgali nāhi cchiṇālī.

Ibid. (18).

ṭālata mora ghara nāhi paḍaveṣī
hāḍīta bhāta nāṃhi niti āveśī
bege saṃsāra bahila jāa
duhila dudhu ki beṇṭe ṣāmāya
balada biāela gāviā bāṃjhe
piṭā duhie e tinā sāṃjhe
jo so budhī soi nibudhī
jo so caura soi duṣādhī
nite nite ṣiālā ṣiheṃ ṣama jujhaa
Ḍheṇḍaṇa-pāera gīta virale bujhai.

Ibid. (33).

Page 34

bhāva na hoi abhāva ṇa jāi
āiṣa saṃbohe ko patiāi
Lūi bhaṇai baṭa dulakkha biṇāṇā
tia-dhāe bilasai uha na jānā
jāhera bāna-cihṇa rūva ṇa jāṇī
so kaise āgama bee bakhānī
kāhere kiṣa bhaṇi mai dibi piricchā
udaka-cānda jima sāca na micchā
Lūi bhaṇai (mai) bhāiba kīṣa
jā lai acchama tāhera uha ṇa dīsa.

Ibid. (29).

uṭṭha bhaḍāro karuṇa maṇu
    pukkhasi mahu parināu
mahāsuha-joe kāma-mahu
    icchahi suṇṇa-sahāu
tomhā-bihuṇṇe marami hauṃ
    uṭṭhahi tuhuṃ Hevajja
chaḍḍahi suṇṇa-sahāvatā
    Savaria sijjhau kajja
loa ṇimantia suraa-pahu
    suṇṇa acchasi kīsa
hauṃ Caṇḍālī biṇṇa nami
    tai biṇu uhami na dīsa
indīālī tuṭṭha tuhuṃ
    hauṃ jāṇami tuhuṃ citta

amhe Ḍombī ccheamaṇu
mā kara karuṇa vicchitta.
Hevajratantra (quoted in *Dohākoṣa*
ed. P. C. Bagchi).

Page 35

siddhiratthu mai paḍhame paḍhiau
maṇḍa pivanteṃ visaria emaiu
akkharamekka ettha mai jāṇiu
tāhara ṇāma ṇa jaṇami e sahiu.
Saraha's *Dohākoṣa*.

kandha-bhūta-āattaṇa-indī-
visaa-viāru apahua
ṇau ṇau dohācchande
kahavi ṇa kimpi goppa.

paṇḍia-loa khamahu mahu
etthu ṇa kiai viappu
jo guruvaaṇeṃ mai suau
tahi kiṃ kahami sugoppu.
kamâla-kulisa bevi majjhaṭhiu
jo so suraa-vilāsa
ko ta ramai ṇaha tihuaṇe hi
kassa ṇa pūrai āsa.

Ibid.

Page 43

kahanti guru paramārthera bāṭa
karma kuraṅga samādhi kapāṭa
kamala vikasila kahiha ṇa jamarā
kamala-madhu pivivi dhoke na bhamarā.

Caryāgīti-padāvalī (* 2).

Page 46

pokharīta pāṇī nāi pāṛa kena buṛe
bāsā-ghare ḍimba nāi chāo kena uṛe
nagare manuṣya nāi ghara cāle cāla

āndhale dokān diā kharīd kare kāla
jhima jāu bariṣā atale jāu mīna
jhāṃpiā tarīte pāṛi samudra gahīna.

Gorakṣavijaya (by Faizullah and others).

Page 58

Kāṅurera Kāma-caṇḍī Kāmatāy āise
bala dekhi nārīra dhātu kothā baise.

Rūparām's *Dharmamaṅgal.*

paśu nay pakṣi nay ḍimba madhye chā
nimeṣe nīrghāta māre nāhi hāta-pā
sakala dekhaye puṇi keha nā dekhiye
parama ratana sei yatnete rākhiye
upare sindura-rāga adhe ta kājala
sadāi cañcala loha kare ḍhalaḍhala
Kāṅurera Kāmacandī Kāmatāy āise
aṣṭāṅga thākite dhātu vāma-cakṣe baise.

Ibid.

Page 74

tirīra sabhava māna kare
tāta roṣa nā kare nāgare
e tomhāra vacane
saba kopa khaṇḍila ekhane.
ehi jāge tomhāra caraṇe
āmhā same nā kariha āne.
tomhāra āmhāra duī maṇe
eka karī gānthila madane
tāra ānurūpa Vṛndāvane
tora bola nā kariba āne.
vidhi kaila tora mora mehe
ekai parāṇa eka dehe
se neha tiaja nāhi sahe
se puni āmhāra doṣa nahe.
ke bulite pāre tora guṇe
eke eke base mora mane
ebe āsi baiśa mora pāśe
gāila Baṛu Caṇḍīḍāse.

Śrīkṛṣṇakirttan ('Vṛndāvana-khaṇḍa').

Page 76

tomhe jabe yogī hailā sakala tejiñā
thākiba yoginī hañā tohāka sebiñā.

Ibid. ('Rādhāviraha').

Page 78

Bāśulī-ādeśe Nityā calila
sahaj jānabār tare.

Page 79

śuklā daśamī tithi vaiśākha māse
śiyare basiyā Padmā kailā upadeśe.
pācālī racite Padmā karilā ādeśa
sei se bharasā āra na jānī viśeṣa
kavi guru dhīrajane kari parihāra
racila Padmāra gīta śāstra-anusāra
sindhu indu veda mahī śaka parimāṇa
nṛpati Husen-śāhā Gauṛera pradhāna.

Manasāvijay (by Vipradās).

Page 81

paṇḍite maṇḍita sabhā Khān mahāmati
eka dina basi āche bāndhava-saṃhati
śunila Bharata pothā ati puṇyakathā
mahāmuni Jaiminira purāṇa-saṃhitā
aśvamedha-kathā śuni prasannahṛday
sabhākhaṇḍe ādeśila Khān mahāśay
vyāsa gīta bhārata śunila cārutara
tāhāta kahila Jaimini munivara
saṃskṛta Bhārata nā bujhe sarvajana
mora nivedana kichu suna kavigaṇa
deśi bhāṣe ehi kathā kariyā pracāra
sañcarau kīrtti mora jagata bhitara
tāhāna ādeśa-mālya māthe āropiyā
Śrīkara Nandīe kahe pāñcālī raciyā.

Mahābhārat (by Śrīkara Nandī).

Page 83-84

ayi dīna-dayārdranātha he
Mathurā-nātha kadāvalokyase
hṛdayaṃ tvadaloka-kātaraṃ
dayita bhrāmyati kiṃ karomy aham.

Padyāvalī.

Page 89

Śrī-Caitanya Nārāyaṇa karuṇāsāgara
duḥkhitera bandhu prabhu more dayā kara.

Caitanyabhāgavata.

Page 88-89

ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanaṃ bhava-mahādāvāgni-
nirvāpaṇaṃ
śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇaṃ vidyā-vadhū-
jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-vardhanaṃ pratipadaṃ
pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanaṃ
sarvātma-snapanaṃ paraṃ vijayate śri-kṛṣṇa-
saṅkīrttanam. 1

nāmnām akāri bahutā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ. 2

tṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrttanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ. 3

na dhanaṃ na janaṃ na sundarīṃ
kavitāṃ vā jagadīśa kāmaye
mama janmani janmanīśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi. 4

ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaram māṃ
patitaṃ viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthitaṃ dhūli-sadṛśaṃ vicintaya. 5

nayanaṃ galad-aśru-dharayā
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā
pulakair nicitaṃ vapuḥ kadā
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati. 6

yugāyitaṃ nimeṣeṇa cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam
śūnyāyitaṃ jagat sarvaṃ Govinda-viraheṇa me. 7
āśliṣya vā pādaratāṃ pinaṣṭu mām
adarśanān marmahatāṃ karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampaṭo
mat-prāṇanāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ. 8

Page 99

Vraja-pure rūp-sāgare raser nadī bay
tīr bahiyā ḍheu āsiyā lāgila Gorā-gāy
gaur-aṅge prem-taraṅge uṭhiche divārāti
jñān-karma yog-dharma tap chāṛila yati
mane mane kata jane dicche rūper dāy
se ye rūp sudhā-kūp ṭhoṛ nāhikā pāy
rūp-bhāvanā galāy sonā ghucibe maner dhāndhā
rūper dhārā bāul pārā bahiche jagat-āndhā
rūp-rase jagat bhāse e caudda bhuvane
khāile yaje dekhile maje kahile kebā jāne
viṣam sevā laiyā yebā āpanā māre ye
Locan bale avahele Gaur pābe se.

Vivarttavilās.

Page 105

sakhi he phiriyā āpana ghare yāo
jīyante mariyā ye āpanā khāiyāche
tāre tumi ki āra bujhāo
nayana-putalī kari lailō mohana rūpa
hiyāra mājhāre kari prāṇa
pirīti-āguni jvāli sakali poṛāiyāchi
jāti-kula-śīla-abhimāna
nā jāniyā muṛha loke ki jāni ki bale moke
nā kariye śravaṇa-gocare
srota-bithāra jale e tanu bhāsāiyāchi
ki karibe kūlera kukure
khāite śuite raite āna nāhi lay cīte
bandhu bīne āna nāhi bhāy
Murāri Gupate kahe pirīti emati haile
tāra yaśa tina loke gāy.

Padakalpataru.

Page 105-106

ki chāra pirīti kailā jīyante badhiyā āilā
bāṁcite saṃśaya bhela Rāi
śapharī salila bina goṅāiba kata dina
śuna śuna niṭhura Mādhāi
ghṛta diyā eka rati jvāli āilā yuga-bāti
se kemane rahe a-yogāne
tāhe se pavane puna nibāila bāsō bena
jhāṭa āsi rākhaha parāṇe
bujhilāma uddesé sākṣāte pirīti toṣe
sthāna-chāṛā bandhu vairī hay
tāra sākṣī padma-bhānu jala chāṛā tāra tanu
śukhāile pirīti nā ray
yata sukhe bāṛhāilā tata duḥkhe poṛāilā
karilā kumuda-bandhu bhāti
Gupta kahe ekamāse dvi-pakṣa chāṛila deśe
nidāne haila kuhū rāti.

Ibid.

Page 106-107

ahe nava jaladhara bariṣa hariṣa baṛa mane
śyāmera milana mora sane
bariṣa manda jhimāṇi
āju hām bañciba rajani
gagane saghane garajanā
dāduri dundubhi bājanā
śikhare śikhaṇḍinī-rola
bañciba suranātha kola
dohāra pirīti-rasa-āśe
ḍubala Vāsudeva Ghoṣe.

Rasakalikā (of Naṭavaradās).

Page 107-108

kiśora vayasa kata baidagadhi ṭhāma
mūrati-marakata abhinava kāma
prati aṅga kona vidhi niramila kise
dekhite dekhite kata amiyā bariṣe

malū malū kibā rūpa dekhilū svapane
khāite śuite mora lāgiyāche mane
aruṇa adhara mṛdu manda manda hāse
cañcala nayana-koṇe jālikula nāśe
dekhiyā bidare buka duṭi bhuru-bhaṅgi
āi āi kothā chila se nāgara raṅgī
manthara calana khāni ādha-ādha yāy
parāṇa kemana kare ki kahiba kāy
pāṣāṇa milāye yāy gāyera bātāse
Balarāmadāse kay avaśa paraśe

Padakalpataru.

Page 108

ālo muñi kena gelū kālindīra jale
cita hari kāliyā nāgara nila chale
rūpera pāthāre ākhi ḍubiyā rahila
yauvanera vane mana hārāiyā gela
ghare yāite patha mora haila aphurāna
antare bidare hiyā phukare parāṇa
candana-cāndera mājhe mṛgamada-dhāndhā
tārá mājhe hiyāra putalī raila bāndhā
kaṭi pīta vasaṇa raśana tāhe jaṛā
vidhi niranila kula-kalaṅkera koṛā
jāti kula śīla saba hena bujhi gela
bhuvana bhariyā mora ghoṣaṇā rahila
kulavatī satī haiyā du-kule dilū dukha
Jñānadāsa kahe dṛḍha kari bāndha buka.

Ibid.

Page 110

kāhāre kahiba manera kathā kabā yāy paratīta
hiyāra mājhāre marama-vedana sadāi camake cīta
gurujana-āge basite nā pāi sadā chala-chala ākhi
pulake ākula diga nehārite saba Śyāmamaya dekhi.
sakhī saṅge yadi jalere yāi se kathā kahila nay
yamunāra jala mukuta kavarī ithe ki parāṇa ray
kulera dharama rākhite nārinu kahila sabāra āge
Rāmacandra kahe Śyāmanāgara sadāi marame jāge.

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Page 111

mandira vāhira kaṭhina kapāṭa
calaite śaṅkila paṅkila bāṭa
tahi ati duratara bādala dola
vāri ki bārai nīla nicola
sundari kaiche karabi abhisāra
Hari raha Mānasa-suradhunī pāra
ghana-ghana jhanajhana bajara-nipāta
śunaite śravaṇa-marama jari yāta
daśadiśa dāminī-dahana bithāra
heraite ucakai locana-tāra
ithe yadi sundari tejabi geha
premaka lāgi upekhabi deha
Govindadāsa kaha ithe ki vicāra
chūṭala bāṇa kiye yatane nivāra.

Padakalpataru.

Page 112

sakhi he ki puchasi anubhava moy
soi pirīti anurāga bākhāniye
anukhana nūtana hoy
janama avadhi haite o rūpa nehāralū
nayana nā tirapita bhelā
lākha lākha yuga hiye hiye mukhe mukhe
hṛdaya juḍana nāhi gelā
vacana-amiyā rasa anukhana śūnalū
śrutipathe paraśa nā bheli
kata madhu-yāminī rabhase goṅāyalū
nā bujhalū kaichena keli
kata bidagadha-jana rasa anumodai
anubhava kāhu nā pekhi
kaha Kavivallabha hṛdaya juṛāite
mīlaye koṭi-me eki.

Ibid.

Page 113

āmāra sundara nāy ye āsiyā dei pāy
hāsiyā gaṇaye ṣola paṇa
e tora nitamba kuca ati guṛutara uca
ekalāe bharā daśa jana
goyālini bujhila tumi baṛa ḍhāṭa
dāna phuṛāiyā cāpa jhāṭa
lākhera paśarā tora nāye pāra habe mora
ihāte pāiba āmi kī
bujhiyā āpane bala pāche yena nahe kala
ei jīvikāy āmi jī
tumi to yuvatī māiyā āmi-ha yuvaka nāiyā
hāsa-parihāse gela dina
o-kūle mānuṣa ḍāke kheyā rahe michā pāke
eta-kṣaṇe haita bharā tina
kṣīra navanīta dai āguāna kichu khāi
naukā bāhite hau bala
dvija Mādhav kahe rasika Yādav-rāye
michāi karaye vāk-chala.

Kṛṣṇamaṅgal.

Page 117

jaya Naranārāyaṇ nṛpati pradhāna
yāhāra samāna rājā nāhika ye āna
dharma nīti purāṇa Bhārata śāstra yata
ahorātri bicāranta basiyā sabhāta
Gauḍe Kāmarūpe yata paṇḍita āchila
sabāka āniyā śātra-deoyān pātila
kavi sabe śāstra bakhānanta sadā tāta
āmāka niyāyā thaiyā-āchanta sabhāta.

Mahābhārat (Vana-parva).

Śukladhvaja anuja yāhāra yuvarāja
parama gahana ati adbhuta kāja
tẽhe moka bulilanta mahaharṣa mane
Bhārata-payāra tumi kariyo yatane

āmāra gharata āche Bhārata praśasta
niyoka āpana gṛhe dilohō samasta
ehā buli rājā pāche baladhi yoṛāi
paṭhāila pustaka āmāsāka ṭhāi
khāibāra sakala dravya dilanta āpāra
dāsa dāsī dilā nāma karāilā āmāra.
eteke tāhāna ājñā dhariyā śirata
Kṛṣṇera yugala-pada dhari hṛdayata
biracilo pada ito ati anupāma
parama sundara Vana-parva yāra nāma.

Ibid.

Page 124-125

dhanya rājā Māna-siṃha Viṣṇu-pade lola bhṛṅga
Gauḍa Vaṅga Utkala samīpe
adharmī rājār kāle prajār pāper phale
khilāt pāy Māmūd sariphe
ujīr hoila rāya-jādā bepāri-kṣatriya khedā
Brāhmaṇa-Vaiṣṇave haila airi
māpe koṇe diyā daṛā panara kāṭhāy kuṛā
nāhi śune prajār gohāri
sarkhel haila kāl khil bhūmi likhe nāl
bini upakāre lay dhuti
potdār haila yam ṭākā āṛhāi ānā kam
pāi labhya lay din prati
mithyā e jagāti bhaṇḍa para dravye kare daṇḍa
ḍākā dei divasa dupare
viṣam rājyer loka para dravya khāite jōk
dekhite dekhite vitta hare
ḍihidār ābudh khoj kaṛi dile nāhi roj
dhānya goru keha nāhi kine
prabhu Gopīnāth Nandī vipāke hailā bandī
hetu kichu nāhi paritrāṇe
jāndār prati nāche prajā palāy pāche
duār chāpiyā dei thānā
prajā dhānye vikalita bece ghar kuṛā nitya
ṭākāker dravya daś ānā.

Caṇḍīmaṅgal.

Page 127-128

kānde siṃha paśu āsi smariyā Abhayā
aparādh vinā mātā dūr kaile dayā
bhāle ṭīkā diyā mātā kari mṛgarāj
kariba tomār sebā rājye nāhi kāj
prāṇer dosar bhāi gela paralok....
ui cārā khāi paśu jātite bhāluk
neugī caudhurī nahi nā kari tāluk
sāt putra vīr māila bāndhi jāla-pāśe
savaṃsé majilū mātā tomār hābyāse....
māgu maila putra maila dui nāti poṣe
dhūlāy dhūsar haiyā kāndaye hastinī
michā var diyā mātā vadh kaile keni
śyāmal sundar putra kamalalocan
bhuru kāma-dhanu rūp madana-gañjan
kānan karaye ālo kapāler cānde . . .
baṛa nām baṛa grām baṛa kalevar
lukāite nāhi ṭhāi vīrer gocar
ki kariba kothā yāba kothā gele tari
āpanār danta duṭā āpanār vairī.
hekaci kariyā kānde sajāru śaśāru
duḥkha nā ghucila mora sevi kalpataru
gāṛher bhitar thāki luki bhāle jāni
ki kari upāy vīr gāṛhe ḍhāle pānī
cāri putra maila mor ār duṭi jhī
māgu maila buṛhā kāle jīyā kāj ki.

Ibid.

Page 128-129

baṛai dāniśmanda kahāre nā kare chanda
prāṇ gele rojā nāhi chāṛi
dharaye Kamboja-veś māthe nāhi rākhe keś
buk ācchādiyā rākhe dāṛi
nā chāṛe āpan pathe daś rekhā ṭupi māthe
ijār paraye dṛḍha daṛi
yār dekhe khāli māthā tā sane nā kahe kathā
sāriyā celār māre bāṛi.

Ibid.

Page 129-130

āre bāchā āy bāchā āy
ki lāgiyā kānde bāchā ki dhan cāy
āniba tuliyā gagana-phula
ekeka phulera lakṣeka mūla
se phula gānthiyā parāba hāra
sonā bāchā mora nā kānda āra
gagana maṇḍale pātiba phānda
bāndhiyā diba tore śarada-cānda
kapāle diva tore se cānda phōṭā
kāli gaṛāiyā diba sonāra bhāṭā
khāoyāba kṣira-khaṇḍa mākhāba cuyā
karpūra pākā pāna sarasa guyā
ratha gaja ghoṛā yautuka diyā
rājāra dui kanyā karāba biyā
Śrīmanta cāpibe sonāra nāy
kasturī kuṅkuma candana gāy
khāṭe nidrā yābe cāmara bāy
Ambikā-maṅgala Mukunda gāy.

Ibid.

Page 137

goṭā dui akṣar paṛāte yāy din
paṛābār velā hoi ehār adhīn.
biśā-śay paṛuyā thāke mor mukh cāiyā
dui prahar velā yāy ehār lāgiyā
goṭā cāri akṣar ananta varṇa kay
sadāi pāṭher velā jañjāl lāgāy
paṛāte nārila tore yāha nija ghar
nahe Navadvīp yāha kibā Śāntipur
nahe Jaugrām cala Kaṇāder ṭhāñi
tār sama bhaṭṭācārya Śāntipure nāñi.

Dharmamaṅgal.

balite balite vākya pāvaker kaṇā
viṭaṅka mukher śobhā basanter cinā
eman vacan śuni mane lāge ḍar
sūryer samān guru param sundar
alaṅghya gurur vākya laṅge kon jan.

Ibid.

Page 138

eke śanivār tāy ṭhik dupar velā
sammukhe dāṇḍāila dharma gale caṇḍramālā
galāy cāpār mālā āsābāṛi hāthe
brāhmaṇer rūpe dharma dāṇḍāila pathe.

Ibid.

Page 138-139

bāṛite basite bhāi baila kuvacan
jananī sahita nāñi haila daraśan
dādā baṛa nidāruṇ bale uccasvare
kāli giyācha pāṭh parite āji āilā ghare
kāchāṛila Jumar Amar abhidhān
vāhire suvanta-ṭīkā gaṛāgaṛi yān
punarvār marame bāndhila khuṅgi pūthī
Navadvīpe paṛibāre yāba divārāti
Sonā Hīrā duṭi bani āchila duāre
jananīke bāratā balite nāñi pāre.

Ibid.

Page 139

ciṛā bhājā uṛyā gela śudhu khāi jal
khuṅgi pūthi bayā jāite aṅge nāi bal.
daiva hetu duḥkha pāi sahaje kātar
dakṣiṇā māgite gelām tāntider ghar
dhāoyādhāi tāntighare dila daraśan
ciṛā-dadhir ghaṭā dekhi ānandita man.

Ibid.

Page 142

tomār kavitva yār bhāla nāhi lāge
savaṃśe tāhāre āmi saṃhārimu bhāghe.

Rāymaṅgal.

Page 143

ardhek mathāy kālā ekabhāge cūṛā ṭālā
vanamālā chilimili sāthe
dhaval ardhek kāy ardha nīl megh prāy
Korān Purāṇ dui hāthe.

Ibid.

Page 147

kanyāke ḍākiyā kichu bale niśācarī
puṣinu tomār tare ati yatna kari
tumi ta āmār tare sadata sebile
janak jananī hatyā mane nā karile
brāhmaṇere bibhā dinu yāha nija ghare
kariha svāmīr sevā param ādare
aparādh āmār sakal kara kṣemā
nindāvād nā kariha bhāgyavatī rāmā
balite balite duṭi cakṣe jal jhare
kanyār galāy giyā mamatāy dhare.

Kamalāmaṅgal.

Page 152

śrāvaṇamāsete mayanā baṛa sukha lāgau
rimijhimi bariṣaye mane bhāva lāgau
dharati bahaye dhārā rāti āndhiyārī
khelaye bandhura sane premera dhāmārī
śyāmala ambara śyāmala kheti
śyāmala daśa diśa divasaka juti
khelaye bijalī mehu ḍhāmarera saṅge
tamasri bhīmaśi niśi raṅga-biraṅge
śrāvaṇe sundara ṛtu laharī oghāra
hari bine kaichane pāiba pāra
kharatara sindhurava pavana dāruṇa
cauguṇa bāṛiyā yāy viraha-āguna . . . .
janama-dukhinī tui rājāra duhitā
viphala se nāma dhara Lorera vanitā
sujana-pirīti jāna nitya-nava mālā
Laskar nāyāka-maṇi jaga ujiyālā.

Daulat Kazi.

Page 155-156

āhā mor bidare parāṇ
jāgite svapane dekhi bhūme nāhi ān
ki jāni likhiche vidhi e pāp karame
pāiyā paraś-maṇi hārāilum bhrame

se sab maner duḥkha kāhāke kahiba
vyathita bāndhav-kul smarite mariba
yuger adhik yāy duḥkhe niśi din
kemane sahiba prāṇe jala bine mīn
ki lāgi dāruṇ jīu āche mor ghaṭe
kaṭhin pāṣāṇ hiyā e dukhe nā phāṭe
mahanta Saiyad Musā jñāne ta kuśal
viraha-vedanā gāhe hīn Ālāol.

Saiful-mulk Badiujjamāl.

Page 163

caṇḍī yadi den dekhā tabe ki se yāy lekhā
pāñcālīr amani racan
buddhi nāi yār ghaṭe tārā bale satya baṭe
pathe caṇḍī dilā daraśan
eta doṣ uddhārite loker caitanya dite
caṇḍī race Rāmānanda Yatī
aneker uparodh keha nā kario krodh
anek śiṣyer anumati.

Caṇḍīmaṅgal (by Rāmānanda).

Page 168

ohe vinod-rāy dhīre yāo he
adhare madhur hāsi bāṃśiṭi bājāo he
nava jaladhara tanu śikhi puccha śakradhanu
pīta-dharā bijulite mayūre nācāo he
nayana-cakor mor dekhiyā hayeche bhor
mukha-sudhākar-hāsi-sudhāy bāṃcāo he
nitya tumi khela yāhā nitya bhālo nahe tāhā
āmi ye khelite kahi se khelā khelāo he
tumi ye cāhani cāo se cāhani kothā pāo
Bhārat yeman cāhe sei-mata cāo he.

Annadāmaṅgal.

Page 170

man re kṛṣi-kāj jāno nā
eman mānav-jamin raila patit abād karle phalta sonā
kālir nāme deore beṛā phasale tachrup habe nā
muktakeśīr śakta beṛā tār kāche ta Yam ghemse nā
adya abda-śatānte vā bājeāpta habe jāna nā
āche ektāre man ei-velā tui cuṭiye phasal keṭe ne nā
guru-datta bīj ropaṇ kore bhakti vāri tāy semca nā
ekā yadi nā pāris man Rāmprasād-ke saṅge ne nā.

Rāmprasād Sen.

Page 172-3

phelāe lāṅgal māṭhe
phelāe lāṅgal māṭhe pālāy chuṭe yata cāṣi-gaṇ
begār dharite āila kata śata jan.
yena caitra māse
bhaktyā-dharā byāpahāra yedike yāke pāy
hāte beṃdhe goptā mere rāstāte khāṭāy.
hāte kore beter bāṛi
hāte kore beter bāṛi taṛātāṛi māre sabār piṭhe
beter bhaye yata koṛā caturdige chuṭe.
khāoā dāoā bandha kore
khāoā dāoā bandha kore rākhe dhore sandhye kāle chuṭi
kodāl piṭhe jhuṛi hāte yāy guṭi guṭi.
sandhey rasad nite
sandhey rasad nite cāri bhite kare mahā gol
kṣudhār jvālāy bikali kare bale Hari-bol.
śune bakhshi ela dheye
śune bakhshi elo dheye rasad laye māpui saṅge kari
rasad dekhe yata koṛā baise sāri sāri.
kayāl rasad māpe
rasad peye cale dheye karkaṛe cibāy
huṭ-pāṭ kore ghāṭe jal giyā khāy.
bale hāy prāṇ bāñcila
bale hāy prāṇ bāñcila dhūlay śula nuṭupaṭu haye
ghum bhāṅgila pipiṛā khāy cale bege dheye.

Rādhāmohan.

Page 173

deoān bale rāyat sab karte pāre
kāke-o svarge tole kāke āchṛe māre
rāyat laiyā sabār ṭhakurāli
yata dekha sonār bālā rāyater kaṛi.

Kṛṣṇahari Dās.

Page 174

dhīre dhīre yāy dekha cāy phire phire
kemane āmare bala yāite ghare
ye chila antare mora bāhye dekhi tāre
nayana-antare hale punaḥ se antare.

Nidhu Babu.

Page 174-175

nānā dese nānā bhāṣā
bine svadeśīya bhāṣe pūre ki āśā
kata nadī sarovar
ki vā phal cātakīr
dhārā jal bine kabhu ghuce ki tṛṣā.

Ibid.

bhālobāsibe bole bhālobasi ne
āmār svabhāv ei tomā boi ār jānine
vidhumukhe madhur hāsi
dekhile sukhete bhāsi
se janye dekhite āsi dekhā dite āsi ne.

Śrīdhar 'Kathak'.

mane raila sai manera vedanā
pravāse yakhan yāy go se
tāre bali bali ār balā holo nā.

Rām Basu.

Page 220

kṣama, sakhe—poṣā pākhī piñjar khulile,
cāhe punaḥ paśibāre pūrva kārāgāre?
esa tumi, esa śīghra, jāba kuñja-vane—
tumi he vihaṅgarāj, tumi saṅge nile.
deha padāśray āsi—prem-udāsinī
āmi, jathā jāo jāba, kariba jā kara,—
bikāiba kāy-manaḥ tava rāṅgā-pāye!

Vīrāṅganā-kāvya (Canto ii).

Page 222

kena eta phul tulili svajani—
bhariyā ḍāla?
meghāvṛta hale pare ki rajanī
tārār mālā?
ār ki jatane kusuma-ratane
vrajer bālā? . . .
ār ki paribe kabhu phula-hār
vraja-kāminī?
kena, lo, harili bhūṣaṇ latār
vanaśobhinī?
ali baṃdhu tār, ke āche rādhār?—
hatabhāginī!

Vrajāṅganā-kāvya .('Kusum')

Page 223

likhinu ki nām mor viphal jatane
bālite, re kāl, tor sāgarer tīre,
phena-cūṛ jalarāśi āsi, ki re, phire,
muchite tucchete tvarā e mor likhane?—
athavā khodinu tāre yaśogiri śire,
guṇ-rūp yantre kāṭi akṣar su-kṣaṇe,—
nāribe uṭhāte yāhā, dhuye nija nīre,
vismṛti, vā malinite maler milane?—
śūnya-jal jala-pathe jale lok smare ;
deva-śūnya devālaye adṛśye nibāse
devatā ; bhasmer rāsi ḍhāke vaiśvānare.

seirūp, dhaṛ jabe pare kālagrāse,
yaśorūpāśrame prāṇ martye bās kare ;—
ku-jaśe narake yena su-jaśe ākāṣe.

Caturdaśpādī Kavitāvalī ('Yaś').

Page 258-9

āji viśva ālo kār kiraṇa-nikare
hṛday uthale kār jayadhvani kare . . .
krame krame nibiteche lok-kolāhal
lalita bāṃśarī-tān uṭhiche keval!
man yena majiteche amṛta-sāgare
deha yena uṛiteche samāveg-bhare.

Nisarga-sandarśan.

Page 259

parer patāṛā-cāṭā āpanār nāi
matāmat-kartā tāṃrā bāṅgālār cāṃi
man kabhu dhāy nāi kavitver pathe
kavirā caluk tabu tāṃhāderi mate
janamete pān nāi amṛter svād
amṛta bilāte kintu mane baṛa sādh.

Sādher Āsan (iv).

Page 261

bhālobāsi nārī nare
bhālobāsi carācare
bhālobāsi āpanāre, maner ānande rai.

Ibid.

Page 263

pradīp laiyā kare, samīr śaṅkāy
eso bālā sumanda-gamane,
dīpta mukh, dīrgha rakta-pradīp-śikhāy
cumbita, cañcal samīraṇe.

Savitā-sudarśan.

Page 265

dakṣiṇer dvār khuli mṛdu-manda-gati
vana-bhūme padārpiyā ṛtu-kulapati
latikār gāṃṭe gāṃṭe phuṭāila phul
aṅge gheri parāila pallava-dukūla.
ki jāni kiser lāgi haiyā udās
gharer bāhir haila malay-bātās.
phuler ghomṭā khuli kāṛaye suvās
"e nahe se" bali śeṣ chāṛaye niśvās.

Svapnaprayāṇ (ii).

Page 265-66

bhāte yathā Satya-Hem, māte yathā Vīr
Guṇa-Jyoti hare yathā maner timir
nava śobhā dhare yathā Som ār Ravi
sei Dev-niketan ālo kare kavi.

Ibid. (iii).

Page 266

dekhā dila aṭṭālikā mahākāy,
pārśva pariṭeche bhāṅgi, ucca-śire mahattva śikhāy.
bhāṅā jānālāy
vāyu phuslāy.

Ibid. (iv).

Page 266

tumi ṭhik yena hṛṣīkeś.
bāromās ananta-śayyāy līn,
ek-rati cetan keval hay vetaner din!

Ibid. (iv).

Page 267

mantrī bale, "bhūp
vetan kirūp
du-cakṣe nā dekhilām batsarek tin."

Ibid. (iv).

Page 267

bhūp bale, "sakalei kṣīṇ-jīvī,
tumi-i keval haitecha dekhi māṃser ḍhibi!
chile śudhu asthi
haiyācha hastī,
vetan pele ki ār thākibe pṛthivī?"

Ibid. (iv).

Page 267-8

kavi tumi—kiser duḥkha tomār, vyathā pele prāṇe
phuṭiyā kahite pāra vedanā jagata-jana kāṇe!
yāhā śuni aśānta nitānta ye bālak—khelā tyaji
seo base śānta haye! seo tār bhāv-rase maji
āpan kājal-āṃkhi karaye sajal! seirūp
nīl-sarasija-dale hima-vindu jhare ṭup ṭup
takhan yāminī-mātā mane peye yātanā duḥsaha
bidāy-cumban den tāhāre sajal āṃkhi saha . . .
araṇyer pākhī tumi, bilāper dhvani kena mukhe!
cirakāl tumi araṇyer pākhī, thākibek tathā
cirakāl! balitechi āmi sei araṇyer kathā,
ye araṇya bātāser sane mukhāmukhi kathā kay—
ḍare na jhāṛe-jhāpaṭe, diganta prācīre baddha nay,
āpane āpani rahe bistāriyā sadānanda-śākhā.

Ibid. (vii).

Page 269-70

āmi tāre bhālobāsi asthi māṃsa saha!
āmi o nārīr rūpe,
āmi o māṃser stūpe,
kāmanār kamanīya keli-kālidaha—
o kardame—oi paṅke,
oi klede—o kalaṅke,
kālīya sāper mata sukhī aharaha!
āmi tāre bhālobāsi asthi māṃsa saha!

Kāstūrī ('Amār Bhālobāsā').

Page 271

e moha-kalaṅka-śikhā—tomāri ki homaśikhā,
dāhiya nīcatā dainya uṭhiche gagane?

Eṣā.

Page 271

hay hok priyatama,
ananta jīvan mama
andhakārmay,
tomār pather pare
ananta kāler tare
ālo yadi ray.

Ālo O Chāyā ('Pāntha-yugal').

Page 274-5

kānnā-hāsir dol-dolāno pauṣ-phāguner pālā
tāri madhye cirajīvan baiba gāner ḍālā—
ei ki tomār khuśi, āmāy tāi parāle mālā
surer gandha ḍhālā.
tāi ki āmār ghum chuṭeche, bāṃdh ṭuṭeche mane
khepā hāoyār ḍheu uṭheche ciravyathār vane,
kāṃpe āmār divā-niśār sakal āṃdhār-ālā.
ei ki tomār khuśi, āmāy tāi parāle mālā
surer gandha ḍhālā.
rāter bāsa hay ni bāṃḍhā, diner kāje truṭi,
vinā kājer sevār mājhe pāi ne āmi chuṭi,
śānti kothāy mor tare hāy viśvabhuvan-mājhe,
aśānti ye āghāt kare tāi to viṇā bāje,
nitya rabe prāṇ-poṛāno gāner āgun jvālā—
ei ki tomār khuśi, āmāy tāi parāle mālā
surer gandha ḍhālā.

Gītavitān (i).

Page 279

yāy re sādh jagat pāne kevali ceye rai
avāk haye āpanā bhule kaṭhāṭi nāhi kai.

Prabhāt-saṅgīt ('Ceye Thākā).

Page 280-81

e moha ka din thāke, e māyā milāy!
kichute pāre nā ār bāṃdhiyā rākhite.
komal bāhur ḍor chinna hoye yāy,
madirā uthale nāko madira-āṃkhite.
keha kāre nāhi cine āṃdhār niśāy.
phul phoṭā sāṅga hole gāhe nā pākhite.

Kaḍi O Komal ('Moha').

Page 281

ye-amṛta lukāno tomāy
se kothāy!
andhakāre sandhyār ākāśe
vijan tārār mājhe kāṃpiche yeman
svarger ālokamay rahasya asīm,
oi nayaner
nibiṛ timir-tale, kāṃpiche temani
ātmār rahasya-śikhā.

Mānasī ('Niṣphal Kāmanā').

Page 281

sakal velā kāṭiyā gela
vikāl nāhi yāy
diner śese śrānta-chavi
kichute yete cāy nā ravi
cāhiyā thāke dharaṇī pāne
bidāy nāhi cāy.
meghete din jaṛāye thāke
milāye thāke māṭhe,
paṛiyā thāke tarur śire,
kāṃpite thāke nadīr nīre,
ḍāṃṛaye thāke dīrghachāyā
meliyā ghāṭe bāṭe.

Ibid. ('Apekṣā').

Page 282-3

jagater śata śata asamāpta kathā yata
akāler vicchinna mukul,
ajñāta jīvan-gulā, akhyāta kīrtir dhūlā
kata bhāv, kata bhay bhul—
saṃsārer daśdiśi jhariteche aharniśi
jharajhar jharaṇār mato—
kṣaṇa-aśru kṣaṇahāsi, pariteche rāśi rāśi
śabda tār śuni avirata.

Sonār Tarī (Varṣāyāpan').

Page 283

meṭho sure kāṃde yena ananter bāṃśi
viśver prāntar mājhe ; śuniyā udāsī
vasundharā basiyā āchen elocule
dūravyāpī śasyakṣetre Jāhnavīr kūle
ek-khāni raudrapīta hiraṇya-añcal
vakṣe ṭāni diyā ; sthir nayana-jugal
dūr nilāmbare magna ; mukhe nāhi vāṇī!
dekhilām tāṃr sei mlān mukh-khāni
sei dvāraprānte līn stabdha marmāhata
mor cāri-vatsarer kanyāṭir mata.

Ibid. ('Jete Nahi Diba').

Page 283-4

āmār pṛthivī tumi
bahu baraṣer ; tomār mṛttikāsane
āmāre miśāye laye ananta gagane
aśrānta caraṇe, kariyācha pradakṣiṇ
savitṛ-maṇḍal . . .
. . . tāi āji
kona-din ānamane basiyā ekākī
Padmā-tīre, sammukhe meliyā mugdha āṃkhi
sarva aṅge sarva mane anubhav kari
tomār mṛttikā mājhe kemane śīhari
uṭhiteche tṛṇāṅkur ;

Ibid. ('Vasundharā').

Page 285

ke se, jāni nā ke, cini nāi tāre—
śudhu eiṭuku jāni, tāri lāgi rātri-andhakāre
caleche mānav-yātrī yug hate yugāntar-pāne
jhaṛ-jhañjhā vajrapāte jvālāye dhariyā sāvadhāne
antar-pradīp-khāni. śudhu jāni, ye śuneche kāne
tāhār āhvān-gīt, chuṭeche se nirbhīk parāne
saṅkaṭ-āvarta mājhe, diyeche se viśva visarjan,
niryātan layeche se vakṣa pāti ; mṛtyur garjan
śuneche se saṅgīter mata. dahiyāche agni tāre,
viddha kariyāche śūl, chinna tāre kareche kuṭhāre ;
sarva priyavastu tār akātare kariyā indhan
cirajanma tāri lāgi jveleche se hom-hutāśan.
hṛtpiṇḍa kariyā chinna raktapadma arghya upahāre
bhakti-bhare janmaśodh śeṣ pūjā pūjiyāche tāre
maraṇe kṛtārtha kari prāṇ.

Citrā ('Ebār Phirāo More').

Page 287

dhanya āmi heritechi ākāśer ālo
dhanya āmi jagatere bāsiyāchi bhālo.

Caitāli ('Prabhāt'.).

Page 287-8

vātāyane basi ore heri pratidin
choṭa meye khelāhīn, capalatāhīn,
gambhīr kartavyarata,—tatpar-caraṇe
āse yāy nitya kāje ; aśru-bharā mane
or mukh pāne ceye hāsi sneha-bhare.
aji āmi tarī khuli yāba desāntare ;
vālikā-o yābe kabe karma-avasāne
āpan svadeśe. o āmāre nāhi jāne,
āmi-o jāni-ne ore ; dekhibāre cāhi
kothā or habe śeṣ jīvasūtra bāhi.
kon ajānita grāme kon dūr deśe
kār ghare vadhū habe, mātā habe śeṣe.
tār pare sab śeṣ,—tār-o pare, hāy,
ei meyeṭir path caleche kothāy.

Ibid. ('Ananta Pathe').

Page 290

kono jiniṣ cinba ye re
pratham theke śeṣ
neba ye sab bujhe paṛe—
nāi se samay leś.
jagaṭṭā je jīrṇa māyā
seṭā janār āge
sakal svapna kuṛiye niye
jīvan-rātri bhāge.
chuṭi āche sudhu du-din
bhālobāsbār mato,
kājer janye jīvan hale
dīrghajīvan hato.
thākba nā bhāi thākba nā keu
thākbe nā bhāi kichu,
sei ānande chal re chuṭe
kāler pichu pichu.

Kṣaṇikā ('*Śes*').

Page 290

dīghir jale jhalak jhale
māṇik hīrā,
sarṣe kṣete uṭhche mete
maumāchirā.
e path geche kata gāṃye,
kata gācher chāye chāye,
kata māṭher gāye gāye
kata vane!
āmi śudhu hethāy elem
akāraṇe!

Ibid. ('Pathe').

Page 291

bali ne to kāre, sakāle vikāle
tomār pather mājhete
bāṃśi buke laye vinā kāje āsi
beṛāi chadma sājete.

yāhā mukhe āse gāi sei gān,
nānā rāgiṇīte diye nānā tān,
ek gān rākhi gopane.
nānā mukh pāne āṃkhi meli cāi,
tomā pāne cāi svapane.

Ibid. ('Antaratama').

Page 291

e mṛtyu chedite habe, ei bhayajāl,
ei puñja-puñjībhūta jaḍer jañjāl,
mṛta āvarjanā. o re jāgitei habe
e dīpta prabhāt kāle, e jāgrata bhave
ei karmadhāme.

Naivedya (61).

Page 291

dayāhīn sabhyatā-nāginī
tuleche kuṭil phanā chakṣer nimiṣe,
gupta nakha-danta tār bhari tīvra viṣe.
jāti-prem nām dhari pracaṇḍa anyāy
dharmere bhāsate cāhe baler vanyāy.

Ibid. (65).

Page 292

dujaner kathā doṃhe śeṣ kari laba
se-rātre ghaṭe ni hena avakāś tava.
vāṇīhīn bidāyer sei vedanāy
cāri dike cāhiyāchi vyartha vāsanāy.
āji e hṛdaye sarva bhāvanār nīce
tomār āmār vāṇī ekatre miśiche.

Smaraṇ ('Milan').

Page 293

ye gandha kāṃpe phuler buker kāche,
bhorer āloke ye gān ghumāye āche,
śārada-dhānye ye ābhā ābhāse nāce
kiraṇe kiraṇe hasita hiraṇe-harite.

sei gandhei gaṛechi āmār kāyā,
se gān āmāte raciche nūtan māyā,
se ābhā āmār nayane pheleche chāyā ;—
āmār mājhāre āmāre ke pāre dharite?

Utsarga (21. 'Kavicarit').

Page 294

he cira-purāno, cirakāl more
garicha nūtan kariyā.
ciradin tumi sāthe chile mor
rabe ciradin dhariyā.

Page 294

khāṃcār mājhe acin pākhi
komne āse yāy,
dharte pārle mana-beṛi
ditem pākhir pāy.

Baul Song (fragment).

Page 297-8

he rudra āmār,
lubdha tārā, mugdha tārā, haye pār
tava siṃhadvār,
saṅgopane
vinā nimantraṇe
siṃdh keṭe curi kare tomār bhāṇḍār.
corā-dhan durvaha se bhār
pale pale
tāhāder marma dale,
sādhya nāhi rahe nāmābār.

tomāre kāṃdiyā tabe kahi vāraṃvār,—
eder mārjanā karo, he rudra āmār.
ceye dekhi mārjanā se nāme ese
pracaṇḍa jhañjhār veśe ;
sei jhaṛe
dhūlāy tāhārā paṛe ;

curir prakāṇḍa bojhā khaṇḍa khaṇḍa haye
se bātāse kothā yāy baye.
he rudra āmār,
mārjanā tomār
garjamān vajrāgniśikhāy,
sūryāster pralay-likhāy,
rakter varṣaṇe,
akasmāt saṅghāter gharṣaṇe gharṣaṇe.

Balākā (11, 'Vicār').

Page 298

vīrer e raktasrot, mātār e aśrudhārā
er yata mūlya se ki dharār dhūlāy habe hārā.
svarga ki habe nā kenā
viśver kāṇḍārī śudhibe nā
eta ṛṇ?
rātrir tapasyā se ki ānibe nā din.
nidāruṇ duḥkha-rāte
mṛtyu-ghāte
mānuṣ cūrṇila yabe nija martya-sīmā
takhan dibe nā dekhā devatār amar mahimā?

Ibid. (37, 'Jhaṛer Kheyā').

Page 299-300

āmār smṛti thāk nā gāṃthā
āmār gīti mājhe,
yekhāne oi jhāuer pātā
marmariyā bāje.
yekhāne oi śiuli-tale
kṣaṇahāsir śiśir jvale,
chāyā yethāy ghume ḍhale
kiraṇ-kaṇā-mālī
yethāy āmār kājer velā
kājer veśe kare khelā,
yethāy kājer avahelā
nibhṛte dīp jvāli
nānā raṅer svapan diye
bhare rūper ḍāli.

Pariśeṣ ('Dināvasān'.)

Page 301

grām-subāde kon-kāle se chila ye kār māsi,
manilāler hay didimā, cunilāler māmi,
balte balte haṭhāt se yāy thāmi
smaraṇe kāro nām ye nāhi mele.
gabhīr niśās phele
cupṭi kore bhābe
eman kore ār kata din yābe.

Charār Chabi ('Pisni').

Page 301-2

nāginīrā cāri dike pheliteche viṣākta niśvās,
śāntir lalita-vāṇi śonāibe vyartha parihās—
bidāy nebār āge tāi
ḍāk diye yāi
dānaver sāthe yārā saṅgrāmer tare
prastut hateche ghare ghare.

Prāntik (18)

Page 302

sūryāster path hate vikāler raudra elo neme
bātās jhimiye geche theme
bicāli-bojhāi gāṛi cale dūr Nadiyār hāṭe
janaśūnya māṭhe.
piche piche
daṛi-bāṃdhā bāchur caliche.
rājavaṃśī pāṛār kināre
pukurer dhāre
Banamālī paṇḍiter baṛa chele
sārākṣaṇ base āche chip phele . . .
ṭeligram elo sei kṣaṇe
Phinlanḍ cūrṇa holo Sobhiyeṭ bomār varṣaṇe.

Sānāi ('Apaghāt').

Page 303

yāhā kichu ceyechinu ekānta āgrahe
tāhār caudik hate bāhur veṣṭan
apasṛta hay yabe
takhan se bandhaner mukta kṣetre
ye cetanā udbhāsiyā uṭhe
prabhāt ālor sāthe
dekhi tār abhinna svarūp,
śūnya tabu se to śūnya nāy.
takhan bujhite pāri ṛṣir se vāṇī—
ākāś ānandapūrṇa nā rahita yadi
jaḍatār nāg-pāśe deha-man haita niścal.
ko hyevānyāt kaḥ prāṇyāt
yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt.

Rogśayyāy (36).

Page 311

icchā kare avirata āpanār manomata
galpa likhi ekekṭi kare.
choṭa prāṇ, choṭa vyathā choṭa choṭa duḥkhakathā
nitāntai sahaj saral,
sahasra vismṛtirāśi pratyaha yeteche bhāsi
tāri du-cāriṭi aśrujal.
nāhi varṇanār chaṭā ghaṭanār ghanaghaṭā
nāhi tattva nāhi upadeś
antare atṛpti rabe sāṅga kari mane habe
śeṣ haye haila nā śeṣ. . . .
seisab helāphelā nimiṣer līlākhelā
cāri dike kari stūpākār,
tāi diye kari sṛṣṭi ekṭi vismṛti-vṛṣṭi
jīvaner śrāvaṇ-niśār.

Sonar Tarī ('Varṣāyāpan').

Page 311-12

śudhu yāoyā āsā, śudhu srote bhāsā,
śudhu ālo-āṃdhāre kāṃdā-hāṃsā.
śudhu dekhā pāoyā, śudhu chuṃye yāoyā,
śudhu dūre yete yete keṃde cāoyā,
śudhu nava durāśāy āge cale yāy—
piche phele yāy miche āśā.

aśeṣa vāsanā laye bhāṅā bal,
prāṇpaṇ kāje pāy bhāṅā phal,
bhāṅā tarī dhare bhāse parāvāre,
bhāv keṃde mare—bhāṅā bhāṣā.

hṛdaye hṛdaye ādha-paricay,
ādhakhāni kathā sāṅga nāhi hay,
lāje bhaye trāse ādho-viśvāse
śudhu ādhakhāni bhālobāsā.

Gītavitān.

Page 321

āge cal, āge cal bhāi,
poṛe thāka piche, more thākā miche
beṃce more kibā phal bhāi.
āge cal, āge cal bhāi.

Page 322

lekhā sambandhe tumi ye prastāv karecha se ati uttam. māsikpatre lekhā apekṣā bandhuke patra lekhā anek sahaj. kāraṇ, āmāder adhikāṃśa bhāv-i buno hariṇer mata, aparicita lok dekhlei dauṛ dey. ābār poṣā bhāv evaṃ poṣā hariṇer madhye svābhāvik vanya-śrī pāoyā yāy nā. . . .

kona ekṭā viśeṣ prasaṅga niye tār āgāgoṛā tarka nāi hola. tār mīmāṃsāi bā nāi hola. keval du-janer maner āghāt-pratighāte cintāpravāher madhye vividha ḍheu tolā—yāte kare tāder upar nānā varṇer ālōchāyā khelte pāre— ei hale-i beś hay. sāhitye e rakam suyog sarvadā ghaṭe nā—sakalei sarvāṅgasundar mat prakāś kartei vyasta—eijanye adhikāṃśa māsikpatra mṛta mater miujiyam bollei hay. . . .

satyake mānuṣer jīvanāṃśer saṅge miśrita kare dile seṭā lāge bhālo. . . .

satyake eman bhāve prakāśita karā yāk yāte loke avilambe jānte pāre ye, seṭā āmār-i viśeṣ man theke viśeṣhbhāve dekhā dicche. āmār bhālo lāgā manda lāgā, āmār sandeha evaṃ viśvās, āmār atīta evaṃ vartamān tār saṅge jaṛita haye thāk, tāhalei satyake jaḍapiṇḍer mata dekhābe nā.

āmār mane hay sāhityer mūl bhāvṭāi tāi.

Sādhanā (Vol. i, No. 4).

Page 323

parer racita itihās nirvicāre ādyopānta mukhasta kariyā evaṃ parīkṣāy ucca nambar rākhiyā paṇḍit haoyā yāite pāre, kintu svadeśer itihās nijerā saṅgraha evaṃ racanā karibār ye udyog, sei udyoger phal keval pāṇḍitya nahe. tāhāte āmāder deśer mānasik baddha jalāśaye sroter sañcār kariyā dey. sei udyame sei ceṣṭāy āmāder svāsthya, āmāder prāṇ.

Page 337

dekha cuṭki sūtra goṭā sattar
likhila Sāṃkhyakār,
tāi kanphārense ḍāyeser pare
cheār paṛe ni tār.
dādā tinṭi bhālume likhile, mālum
haita elem yata,
ār darśan-śākhe hato yoge-yāge
śākhāpati antata.
hāy alpe sārite marila becārā
likhe ha-ya-ba-ra-la,
ei Jambudvīpe kono phelośipe
vaktā nā hala—a!

Hasantikā ('Cuṭki').

Page 338

bhasmalocan sab sabhyatā rukṣa
kal kore gile khāy joyāner joyānī,
cuṃye yāy kṣet-bhuiṃ cimnir dhoṃyāte,
Gaṅgā se sepṭik ṭyaṅker dhoyānī.

Page 357

ūrdhvamukhe dheyāiyā rajohīn rajanīr mallikā-mādhavī
nehāriyā nīhārikā-chavi—
kalpanār drākṣā-vane madhu cusi, nīrakta adhare,
upahāsi dugdhadhāra dharitrīr pūrṇa payodhare,
bubhukṣu mānav lāgi raci indrajāl
āpanā vañcita kari cira ihakāl
kata-din bhulāibe martya jane bilāiyā mohan āsav,
he kavi-vāsav?

Vismaraṇī ('Mohamudgar').

Page 358-9

o nāki śapath kareche,—'kapāle nā juṭile khāṃṭi sonā
ābharaṇ-hīn keṃde yāk din, khāde tabu bhuliba nā? . . .
bhakti prem ki daṇḍer tāle śrīcaraṇe māthā ṭhokā?
mukti ki ei—ḍaṛā chiṃṛe chuṭe sākim khoṃyāṛe ḍhokā?

Marumāyā ('Duḥkher Kavi').

Page 359

mithyār mohe yadi keha kabhu satyai sukh pāy—
tapta baliyā bhāṇ kore keha pāntā juṛāte cāy—
laye Gopāler parāṇ-putali
bandhyār sneha uṭhe ye uthali—
tār sei sukhe kār nā vakṣa aśrute bhese yāy?
kaṭhor satya smaraṇ karāye ke tāre śāsite cāy?

Hemanta-godhūli ('Duḥkher Kavi').

Page 367

pālki caṛe caṛe kār pā paṅgu haye geche,—
āj oi nagna sabal pāyer saṅge pā miliye cala.
māthāy pā diye diye kār pā bhāri halo
pāper bhāre,—
oi puṇyapather dhūlāy nāmāo se bhār.

'Pāṃodal'.

Page 373

hāy cil, sonāli ḍānār cil, ei bhije megher dupure
tumi ār keṃdo nāko uṛe uṛe dhānsiṛi nadīṭir pāśe!
tomār kānnār sure beter phaler mato tār mlān cokh
mane āse!
pṛthivīr rāṅā rājkanyāder mato se ye cale geche
rūp niye dūre;
ābār tāhāre kena ḍeke āno? ke hāy hṛday khuṃṛe
vedanā jāgāte bhālobāse!
hāy cil, sonāli ḍānār cil, ei bhije megher dupure
tumi ār uṛe uṛe keṃdo nāko dhānsiṛi nadīṭir pāśe!

Mahāpṛthivī ('Hāy Cil').

Page 379-80

āyuḥkṣaṇ mahāvitta, prakāṇḍa nirālā samaye,
kāyāhīn ispātī digante kichu māyā.
pardāy-pardāy raṅ lege yāy kṣaṇṭuku juṛe
tātei prāṇer bali ekānta samay;
nice tāri gāch nadī
priyajan se-muhūrte cale, —
dokāne kaleje ṭreṇe seikṣaṇ āyu
kī bojhāy kichui jāni nā—
śudhu se-muhūrte bāṃci tomār bhuvane.

Pālā-badal ('Eroplene' st. 2).

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